NEPALI: THE EMERGENCE OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Since the thirteenth century, the Indo-Aryan language now known as Nepali has become the mother tongue of an increasingly large proportion of the population of the eastern Himalaya and is spoken throughout the highlands of Nepal and contiguous regions of India. After the political unification of Nepal in the late eighteenth century, the importance of Nepali as an integral part of Nepalese national identity grew considerably. Early in this century, it acquired the official status of the national language of Nepal.

This study is concerned with the development of the Nepali language and its literature. The first part describes the linguistic diversity of Nepal in order to demonstrate the need for a lingua-franca in the region. Statistics provided by Government censuses are utilised to quantify the number of speakers of various languages and to evaluate their current status. The effect which the increasing dominance of Nepali has had upon the other languages of the country is also examined.

The second part of this study describes the efforts which have been made by Nepali-speakers to standardise and promote their language as a major factor in favour of national integration, and assesses the adequacy of Nepali to perform the functions which have been prescribed for it as a national language. Particular attention is paid to the rôle of the language as the medium of education.

The third part of the study traces the evolution of a Nepali "national literature", the existence of which is quite fundamental to the modern status of the language. The most important trends in the development of standard written Nepali are described, and illustrated by extracts ranging from the earliest known inscriptions to a variety of modern published works. Developments in Nepali literature which serve to distinguish it from the literature of other North Indian languages are identified and analysed.

Nepali: the Emergence of a National Language

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Introduction

This study describes the development of Nepali as the national language of Nepal, and examines the major literary achievements which have contributed to its growth. Ever since the political unification of the country, which took place during the last decades of the 18th century, the conscious promotion of Nepali by the Government of Nepal has been one of the most important elements of its building of the nation. Even now, the issue of language occupies a significant place in Nepalese nationalism.

Although very few studies of Nepali have been produced in English, Nepalese scholars have devoted a great deal of time to the study of their national language and its literature. Thus most of the information presented in this study has been drawn from original sources in Nepali. Research for this study was conducted in London from 1980 to 1984, with a visit to Nepal in 1981-82; readings in Nepali scholarly works were supplemented by consultation and correspondence with scholars in Nepal.

The first two parts of this study document the emergence of the national language, initially in the form of a functioning lingua franca and subsequently as an increasingly standardised written language. In order to set Nepali in its linguistic context, the various languages currently spoken in Nepal are described with reference to statistics taken from the Censuses of Nepal and with the assistance of a number of supplementary works. This account of the country's linguistic diversity is intended to demonstrate the need for a "link language" common to all linguistic groups in an increasingly unified and integrated nation. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the effect which the dominance of Nepali has had upon the "minority languages" of Nepal; the situation with regard to the Indo-Aryan languages of the Tarai has been comparatively well documented elsewhere, and so particular attention has been paid in this study to the linguistic changes which have occurred among the Tibeto-Burman speaking populations of the hills.

The second part of the study is more directly concerned with Nepali

itself. The early origins of the language and the distribution of its speakers are described and its current status of national language is explained in terms of the growth of modern linguistic nationalism in Nepal. Chapter 7 describes the efforts which have been made by grammarians and lexicographers to standardise written Nepali and to render it adequate to perform the tasks which are prescribed for it, and the final chapter of the section assesses the extent to which Nepali now fulfils its rôle as the medium of education in Nepal.

The third and most lengthy section of the study describes the development of Nepali literature. Particular attention is paid to the evolution of a literary form of the language and so extracts from the texts under consideration are given in the original Nepali as well as in English translation; this is intended to illustrate the changes which have occurred in written Nepali. The account of literary development begins with an examination of some 14th-century inscriptions which are the earliest examples of written Nepali extant. Epigraphy excites considerable interest in Nepal and research is continuing in this field. This account summarises the most important discoveries which have been made so far and suggests some tentative conclusions. For the account of the "middle period" of Nepali literature which follows, much use was made of the works of such pioneers as Bāburām Ācārya, Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya and Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel. Chapters 11 and 12 identify the major literary trends of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries and assess the extent to which a standard form of written Nepali evolved during the period.

It is quite evident that the bulk of Nepali literature has been written since the mid-19th century, and that the number of Nepali writers has expanded rapidly since the early 20th century. Thus it has not been feasible to mention every modern writer of note in this account of literary development; rather, the study concentrates on the most important writers of the period 1840-1960. The great prestige enjoyed by such writers ensures that a substantial number of critical and

biographical studies are available in Nepali. Their works reflect most of the literary trends of the period and Chapter 15, which describes the early development of Nepali publishing, provides a context for the accounts of their lives and works which follow. The final chapter brings the study up to date by summarising recent developments in modern Nepali literature.

Thanks are due to the Dept. of Education and Science, who funded this research, and to the Central Research Fund of the University of London for their loan of funds and equipment. The advice, encouragement and interest of Dr. David Matthews and the friendly co-operation of the staff of the Department of Indology have been of immeasurable value over the past four years. A debt must also be acknowledged to Abhi Subedi, Churamani Bandhu, Ballabh Mani Dahal, Subhadra Subba, Paras Mani Pradhan, Ramlal Adhikari and many other scholars and poets of Kathmandu and Darjeeling for their help and advice. Nor will the kind hospitality of Lobsang Shakya and his family and of the many people who offered shelter in the hills of Nepal ever be forgotten.

Note on transliteration

The method adopted in this study for the transliteration of devanāgarī script into Roman characters is generally consistent with the system summarised in Table 1. Inconsistencies in Nepali spellings and pronunciation nevertheless pose certain problems, and the greatest of these is the question of the inherent a vowel which follows devanāgarī consonants. Fidelity to original Nepali spellings would produce inconsistencies in the transliteration system and so the decision regarding the final a of Nepali words and names is made with reference to their pronunciation, except in cases where the omission of the vowel in the middle of a word could erroneously be taken as a representation of a conjunct consonant. In general, great care is taken to preserve the original devanāgarī spellings of Nepali words in their transliterated versions. Thus the temptation to transliterate both ṣ and ś as "sha" has been resisted, and the distinction between these two consonants is maintained.

The spellings of authors' names are adopted with reference to the written sources in which they occur. Thus the names of Nepali writers which appear only in the devanāgarī script are transliterated according to the system outlined above, while Nepali authors who have adopted their own Romanised spellings for their names retain these spellings throughout.

The names of languages and regions are spelled as they are in the Nepal Censuses. A great deal has been written in English about Kathmandu, Newari and the Sherpas and the adoption of spellings such as Kāṭhmāṛauṃ, Nevārī or Śerpā seems unnecessarily pedantic.

TABLE 1: Transliteration

Vowels		Gutturals		Cerebrals		Labials		Anusvāra*	
अ	a	क	ka	ट	ṭa	प	pa	ं	ṃ
आ	ā	ख	kha	ठ	ṭha	फ	pha		
इ	i	ग	ga	ड	ḍa	ब	ba	Visarga	
ई	ī	घ	gha	ढ	ḍha	भ	bha	:	ḥ
उ	u	ङ	ṅa	ण	ṇa	म	ma		
ऊ	ū								
ऋ	ṛ	Palatals		Dentals		Semivowels			
ए	e	च	ca	त	ta	य	ya		
ऐ	ai	छ	cha	थ	tha	र	ra		
ओ	o	ज	ja	द	da	ल	la		
औ	au	झ	jha	ध	dha	व	va		
		ञ	ña	न	na				

Sibilants		Aspirates	
श	śa	ह	ha
ष	ṣa		
स	sa		

*Anusvāra is transliterated as ṅ before gutturals
ñ before palatals
ṇ before cerebrals
m before labials

PART ONE

THE LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY OF NEPAL

Chapter 1

The Languages of Nepal

Although the population of Nepal numbers only fifteen million,[1] it is extremely diverse. There have been several periods of immigration by peoples belonging to a variety of ethnic groups, and the constraints of geography within the country have conspired to produce a plethora of small and isolated communities. The Nepalese are a nation who present a semblance of cultural homogeneity to the outside world, but in reality they are still composed of a number of disparate elements. Although Nepal is officially a Hindu kingdom ruled by a king who is believed to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu, this monarch's subjects adhere to a number of religious faiths. Beside Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, there are many more archaic 'tribal' cults which defy simplistic classification. Similarly, the nation now possesses an officially-sanctioned national language, but nearly half of the population still speak a great variety of languages as mother-tongues. The Nepal Census of 1971 classified these languages into nineteen separate categories, but this scheme took no account of the mutual unintelligibility of the many dialects of some languages, nor of the languages which had been subsumed into two categories of 'local district languages' and 'other languages'. As early as 1928, the following observation was made by Professor Turner regarding the linguistic diversity of Nepal:

> "In a population of under six millions in all there are spoken at least scores....of languages, all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects. Even within the limits of a single valley there may be a village the inhabitants of which speak a language completely unintelligible to their neighbours in the next

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1. Preliminary results from the Nepal Census of 1981 indicate that the total population of Nepal now exceeds 15 million. M.C.Regmi: Nepal Press Digest, vol.27, no.45 (November 7, 1983). Total population in 1971 was 11,556,000.

village a mile or two away."[2]

It is quite evident that both Nepalese and foreign scholars have been aware of this linguistic diversity for at least a century, but few studies have been made of most of the more obscure languages. In fact, so little is known about some of them that they have not yet conclusively been classified as belonging to one language group or another. This diversity is decreasing appreciably as the political and cultural unification of the country proceeds; at least one language, Bayu, is reputed to have 'died out'.[3] Yet the linguistic and literary studies conducted in Nepalese academic institutions mostly concern themselves with the national language, Nepali. Consequently, even such elementary matters such as the methodology which should be adopted in the formulation of a 'linguistic map' of Nepal remain controversial. In this context, Kamal P. Malla notes:

> "It would be a happy but over-simplified generalization to talk of two languages, two peoples, or even two cultures of Nepal - the language and culture of the conquerors (i.e. the Gorkhas) and the language and culture of the subjugated peoples (e.g., the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley). Such a neat segmentation ....is not very helpful for examining the complex ethnic, cultural and linguistic situation in Nepal."[4]

Dor Bahadur Bista, a leading Nepalese anthropologist, also complains that:

> "....there have been a number of studies which view the Nepalese world from a monocultural-linguistic perspective for the simple

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2. R.L.Turner: "The People and their Languages" in: W. Brook Northey and C.J.Morris (ed.): The Gurkhas. Their Manners, Customs and Country, London, 1928, p.63.
3. Ballabh Mani Dahal and Subhadra Subba: "Language Policies and Indigenous Languages of Nepal", (Unpublished paper.) Kathmandu, 1981.
4. Kamal P. Malla: The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.135.

reason that this is easier to do."[5]

On occasion, one does feel that this simplistic segmentation of Nepalese society is endorsed by Nepali-speaking scholars. As we will see, the reality is very much more complex.

Ethnic Diversity

Very few of the many ethnic groups of Nepal would claim to be indigenous to the regions they now inhabit. It is generally accepted that the people who traditionally speak Nepali as their mother-tongue originally came from the west and south of the country within the last thousand years. This theory accounts for the continuing dichotomy between the Tibeto-Burman peoples of east and west; those native to eastern Nepal, such as the Rai, are markedly less familiar with Nepali than those in the west, such as the Gurung. Thus it would seem that the process of Sanskritisation (the incorporation of non-Hindu groups into the caste hierarchy which was first described by the Indian anthropologist M.N.Srinivas)[6] has reached a more advanced stage in the west of the kingdom than it has in the east. In Nepal, this Sanskritisation is quite closely related to 'Nepalisation',[7] the incorporation of these disparate groups into the 'mainstream' of Nepalese life and it has profound linguistic and cultural implications.

The early Indo-Aryan immigrants were preceded by peoples who spoke Tibeto-Burman languages. The first wave of these immigrants was probably of those who now speak languages which Grierson classified as

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5. Dor Bahadur Bista: "The Process of Nepalization" in: Shigeru Iijima and Dor Bahadur Bista (ed.): Anthropological and Linguistic Studies of the Gandaki Area in Nepal, Tokyo, 1982, pp.1-2.
6. M.N.Srinivas: Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, Bombay and New York, 1962.
7. It seems that Dor Bahadur Bista (op.cit., 1982) was the first to use the term "Nepalization" in anthropological literature.

'pronominalized',[8] including the Rai, the Limbu and certain strata of the Newar groups.[9] They almost certainly came from the north; most of these groups possess their own myths to explain their origins, and the Svayambhu Purāṇa[10] mentions that the great Bodhisattva Manjuśrī brought a colony of settlers with him from the north after draining the Kathmandu Valley of its lake. The second wave of immigration from the north involved speakers of 'non-pronominalized'[11] Tibeto-Burman languages such as the Gurung, Magar and Tamang. Their languages are purported to bear no trace of the "Austro-Asiatic elements" which have been identified in the languages of the earlier immigrants.[12] The third and most recent immigration from the north was that of the smaller groups of more recognisably Tibetan peoples such as the Sherpa. It is very difficult to establish dates for any of these movements, but the Kathmandu Valley was probably inhabited by speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages prior to the rise of the Licchavi dynasty (5th-9th centuries), as more than 80% of the place names there were then non-Sanskritic.[13]

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8. The classification of Nepalese Tibeto-Burman languages into groups labelled "pronominalized" and "non-pronominalized" was first suggested by Brian H. Hodgson (Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, London, 1874) and was endorsed by G.A.Grierson in the Linguistic Survey of India. (Vol.III Tibeto-Burman Family, Part I, Calcutta, 1909, pp.177-181). Although several, more detailed classifications have been devised, these rather vague categories are still employed by most writers on the subject.
9. Not all of the people now known as Nevār share a common origin; the ethnic composition of Newar societies is less homogenous than is often assumed. The various theories concerning the origins of the Newars are summarised and assessed by Victor S. Doherty: "Notes on the Origins of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal" in: James F. Fisher (ed.): Himalayan Anthropology, The Hague and Paris, 1978.
10. The Svayambhu Purāṇa is a Buddhist account of the draining and colonisation of the Kathmandu Valley. Mana Bajra Bajracharya and Warren W. Smith: Mythological History of the Nepal Valley from Svayambhu Purana, Kathmandu, 1978.
11. Grierson, op.cit., 1909, pp.182-213.
12. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.226.
13. Kamal P. Malla: "River-Names of the Nepal Valley: A Study in Cultural Annexation", Contributions to Nepalese Studies, Vol.10, Nos. 1 & 2 (Dec.1982/June 1983).

The indigenous population of the Nepalese hills were probably of Austro-Asiatic stock; Hodgson thought that their descendants were represented by the 'broken tribes' such as the Bayu (or Hayu), the Chepang, and speakers of obscure languages such as Jhangad and Kusunda. Very little scholarly attention has been paid to these peoples since Hodgson's papers were published in the mid-19th century[14] and so it is difficult to assess the claims which are occasionally made for their antiquity.

The classification of these ethnic and linguistic groups continues to cause problems. Although many of them seem once to have inhabited 'homeland' areas which could be defined geographically, subsequent migrations within Nepal have complicated the picture greatly. Quite sizeable 'enclaves' of minorities now live far from their supposed 'homelands'. In 1973, the anthropologist Walter Frank proposed a classification of these groups under 'cluster' headings, using terminology culled from Nepali vocabulary and relating their distribution to altitude.[15] He asserted that the 'domain of the Bhotia people' lay on the Tibetan border and that those groups could be considered to be 'Tibetan in cultural, anthropological and linguistic respect'.[16] With regard to the 'wide spectrum of ethnic groups' in the middle hill regions, known to the lowland population as pahāṛī, Frank formulated two groups: "Parbatiya" (Indo-Aryans), and "Paharia" (Tibeto-Burmans), on the somewhat tendentious grounds that these were the words used by members of these groups to refer to themselves and to one another.[17] He gave the appellation "awalia", 'malarial' to the groups inhabiting the Śivālik and Mahābhārata foothills and stated that the dialects of Tharu, Danuwar, Majhi and Darai were 'autochthonous with Austro-Asiatic elements'.[18]

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14. Most of Hodgson's papers were first published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal between 1840 and 1860.
15. Walter A. Frank: "Attempt at an Ethno-Demography of Middle Nepal" in: Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (ed.): The Anthropology of Nepal, Warminster, 1974.
16. Ibid., p.88.
17. Ibid., p.89.
18. Ibid., p.89.

This conclusion is at variance with the results of other linguistic analyses of these languages.[19]

Other scholars have been more circumspect in their writings on this subject. Bista, a leading Nepalese anthropologist, merely divides them into three main groups: Himalayan, Middle Hills and Terai, and cautiously adds:

> "....because of the increasing mobility of different groups across geographic boundaries the regional divisions indicate only the stereotypes."[20]

Enumeration of Languages

Further problems are encountered when one attempts to enumerate the languages of Nepal. Dr. Subhadra Subba of the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies, Kathmandu, compiled a list of over 50 languages in 1976, which she divided into four groups: Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burmese, Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and Dravidian (Northern Kurux).[21] Although 75% of the languages of Nepal belong to this second group, speakers of Indo-Aryan languages constitute over 80% of the population.

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19. Such as the phonemic summaries of twelve Nepalese Tibeto-Burman languages which were produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, in conjunction with the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies, Kathmandu, between 1969 and 1972. See also: Churamani Bandhu: Nepālī Bhāṣāko Utpatti, Lalitpur (3rd edn.), 1979, pp.175-183.
20. Dor Bahadur Bistra: People of Nepal, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1972, (preface to Second Edition, p.vii).
21. Subhadra Subba: "The Languages of Nepal" in: Lindsay Friedman (ed.): Seminar Papers in Linguistics, Kirtipur, 1976, pp.139-150.

TABLE 2: Indo-Aryan Languages of Nepal

Language	No. of speakers (1971)[22]	% of total population
Nepali	6,060,800	52.44
Maithili	1,327,200	11.48
Bhojpuri	806,500	6.98
Tharu	496,900	4.29
Avadhi	317,000	2.74
Rajbansi	55,100	0.48
Danuwar	10,000	0.09
Bengali	9,900 (1961)	
Marwari	6,700 (1961)	
Majhi	5,900 (1961)	
Hindi	2,900 (1961)	
Urdu	2,700 (1961)	
Kumhale	1,700 (1961)	
Darai	1,600 (1961)	
Bote	unspecified	

As we shall see, the accuracy of the figures given for speakers of Hindi, Urdu and Bengali is seriously in doubt, and the picture is complicated further by the lack of information concerning inter-dialectal relationships. For instance, there are four distinct dialects of Tharu: three of these (Maithili Tharu, Bhojpuri Tharu and Avadhi Tharu) may not be very closely related to the fourth (Chitavan Tharu).[23] Similarly, the three dialects of the Danuwar language (Danuwar Rai, Done Danuwar and Kacharya Danuwar) may in fact be distinct languages.[24] The Bote language, too, which may now be "extinct", was probably very closely related to Majhi.[25] Bearing all this in mind, one arrives at a total of between ten and fourteen Indo-Aryan languages, or of between fourteen and eighteen if the four 'Indian' languages are not to be discounted.

The precise nature of the situation is even less clear with regard to the Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal. Few of them have been the subject of any prolonged or rigorous study, partly because it is only Newari and Tibetan which possess any substantial body of literature. The compiler of the list mentioned above also seems to have included several regional dialects of Tibetan as distinct languages.[26]

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22. Statistics for Tables 1 and 2 are drawn from the 1971 Census, unless otherwise specified. They are given to the nearest 100 speakers.
23. Subba, op.cit., 1976, p.142.
24. Ibid., p.144.
25. Ibid., p.145.
26. Ibid., p.142.

TABLE 3: Tibeto-Burman Languages of Nepal

Language	No. of speakers (1971)	% of total population
Tamang	555,100	4.8
Newari	455,000	3.94
Magar	288,100	2.5
Rai-Kiranti	232,300	2.01
Gurung	171,600	1.49
Limbu	170,800	1.48
'Bhote Sherpa'	79,200	0.69
Sunwar	20,400	0.18
Chepang	9,200 (1961)	
Dhimal	8,200 (1961)	
Thakali	4,100 (1961)	
Pahari[27]	3,000 (1961)	
Jirel	2,800 (1961)	
Lepcha	1,300 (1961)	
Meche	900 (1961)	
Raji	800 (1961)	

Unspecified figures: Byansi (1,800 in 1952), Tibetan, Bayu (Hayu), Loke, Kham, Kaike, Lhomi, Rautya, Thami.

The list is complicated by the following factors: a) Tamang has a western and an eastern dialect, which are probably mutually incomprehensible.[28] b) Rai-Kiranti, or Rai-Kirat, is a group of some seventeen languages, of which an undetermined number are only distantly related to one another.[29] c) Limbu consists of two mutually unintelligible dialects: Chha Thare Limbu "Six Clans' Limbu", and Panch Thare Limbu[30] "Five Clans' Limbu" d) Some of these languages, such as Bayu, may no longer retain any speakers, but there is no information relating to them in the censuses.[31] There may well be other languages which have been omitted from this list. e) Languages such as Loke and Kaike may be local dialects of Tibetan which would not ordinarily be regarded as separate languages.[32]

Thus it is well-nigh impossible to arrive at an accurate estimate of the number of Tibeto-Burman languages which are currently spoken in

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27. paharī, an obscure Tibeto-Burman language, should not be confused with pahāṛī, which is one of the names given to Nepali by residents of the Tarai.
28. Subba, op.cit., 1976, p.142.
29. These are listed in ibid., p.143.
30. Dr.Subba (ibid., p.146) calls Panch Thare Limbu "proper Limbu" but does not substantiate her statement or enlarge upon it.
31. The Bayu (Bāyu) language has also been referred to as Hāyu; it was spoken by a minor tribe inhabiting an area between the Koshi and Sunkoshi rivers in eastern Nepal and may have "died out" (ibid., p.146). Little has been written about Bayu-speakers since

(contd. on next page.....)

Nepal. There may be as few as twenty-one or as many as forty-three if one opts to treat each dialect as a discrete language.

Austro-Asiatic Languages

Speakers of Satar and Santhali total 24,900 in Nepal, the majority of over 20,000 being tribal Santhals who are related to those of Bihar and eastern Bengal. There is also an unspecified number of speakers of Kusunda, another member of the Munda group of languages.[33]

Dravidian Languages

The Nepal Census of 1961 recorded 9,200 speakers of Jhangad, a member of Grierson's Northern Kurukh group,[34] in the southeastern Tarai district of Morang.

The primary source for most of the linguistic data presented in this study is the Nepal Census. Although the three censuses which have been compiled since 1952 are most valuable, they contain many inaccuracies and distortions and are therefore open to interpretation. In the next few pages, the attitude of the Nepal Government to the linguistic diversity of its country will be examined in some detail, in the context of census compilation.

(.....contd. from previous page)
Hodgson's studies in the mid-19th century. (B.H.Hodgson: "On the Vayu Tribe of the Central Himalaya", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol.27, no.5 (1858).

32. "Loke" might in fact be the dialect of Tibetan which is spoken in Lo, or Mustang (Tib: blo skad).

33. Subba, op.cit., 1976, p.147.

34. G.A.Grierson: L.S.I., vol.IV Muṇḍā and Dravidian Languages, Calcutta, 1906, pp.406-445. Speakers of Kurukh, a Dravidian language, were recorded in northern Bihar and also in Darjeeling, but no mention was made of the Jhangad language. Dr.Subba seems to have preferred the spelling Kurux to Grierson's kurukh.

Chapter 2

The Censuses of Nepal

One objective of the Government of Nepal is to define and delimit its geographical sphere of influence, and to introduce measures which will integrate the population of this area into what is demonstrably one single nation. Thus, two of the most fundamental objectives of the Nepalese administration are internal cohesion and external distinction.[1] For internal cohesion, the many communities which inhabit the various regions of Nepal must believe themselves to be Nepalese, identifying closely with national values and aspirations and recognising His Majesty's Government as the highest authority of their society. Once this has been achieved, it must be possible to distinguish the unified and integrated nation of Nepal from those which adjoin it geographically. A distinct Nepalese cultural identity is therefore highly desirable.

The internal cohesion of Nepal and its external distinction from its neighbours are objectives which currently face many obstacles, although they are by no means unattainable in the long term. Its internal cohesion is hampered by the existence of disparate ethnic, religious and linguistic groups throughout the country. Although the de facto political unification of the late 18th century ended an era of severe fragmentation which saw the existence of as many as forty-six petty kingdoms in the western half of the country,[2] group loyalties are still in evidence. There have been few demands for Government support or recognition from minority groups,[3] and a kind of 'integration' has

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1. The expressions "internal cohesion" and "external distinction" are taken from an article by Einar Haugen: entitled "Dialect, Language, Nation", American Anthropologist, vol.68 (1966), p.928.
2. The bāīsī rājā (twenty-two kings) and caubīsī rājā (twenty-four kings). Fr. Ludwig Stiller, the eminent scholar of Nepalese history, comments: "When the numbers of states that existed throughout the hills are added up....the total number of kingdoms is so large that it tends to impede all proper perspective", The Silent Cry, Kathmandu, 1976, p.30.
3. As we shall see, such demands have been made from time to time by supporters of Hindi, Newari and Maithili.

certainly made progress, but regionalism and political fragmentation are pitfalls of which the Nepal Government remains wary.

Concurrently, achievement of the objective of external distinction is hampered by similar problems. The population of Nepal does not represent one single cultural community, and so the peoples inhabiting the border regions of the country are often indistinguishable from their neighbours in India or Tibet, in appearance, language and customs. Frontier restrictions were not enforced with any strictness or consistency until comparatively recently and in many areas, particularly in the south, the distinction between 'Nepal' and 'India' becomes blurred. The economic subordination of Nepal to its large and powerful neighbours also prevents it from achieving a level of economic independence which might enhance the progress of the process of 'Nepalisation'.[4] The objectives of internal cohesion and external distinction are both reflected in government policy concerning the issue of language. In Nepal, the encouragement of national loyalty requires improvements in the internal communications system. One element of such a reform is the establishment of a "single linguistic code";[5] hence the need for a national language. As Einar Haugen put it, "Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language."[6] The question of the promotion of the national language of Nepal will be examined in some detail later in this study. Here we will examine the ways in which those who were responsible for the official propagation of the Nepali language have presented the statistical evidence for its status within Nepal.

Census Compilation in Nepal

It has become something of a tradition in South Asia to compile a

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4. For an authoritative analysis of the "peripheral" economic and political status of Nepal, see: Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon: Nepal in Crisis, Oxford, 1980.
5. Haugen, op.cit., 1966, p.927.
6. Ibid., p.927.

national census: the British began the practice with 'modern' methodology in India in 1881 and their censuses were remarkable for the scope and variety of the material they included. Together with Sir G.A.Grierson's tour de force, the Linguistic Survey of India, these surveys made a vast quantity of information available regarding the languages of the subcontinent. The Government of India continues to compile censuses in a similar format and on a similar scale.

It is only since the political changes of 1950/51 that Nepal has begun to produce censuses which could be described as exhaustive. Between 1847 and 1950 the Rana government are said to have carried out four "head-counts", with the purpose of estimating the revenue which would accrue to them from their taxation procedures.[7] Between 1911 and 1941, there were four such 'censuses' which yielded the following statistics for the total population of Nepal:

1911	5,639,000
1920	5,574,000
1930	5,533,000
1941	6,284,000[8]

Each of these were almost certain to have been under-estimated. The enumerators were mostly zamīndārs, local landlords,[9] and the results are best regarded as estimates of the population inhabiting the more accessible regions of Nepal. No linguistic data were published by the Nepal Government until 1958 and so the only materials relating to the languages of Nepal prior to that date are the reports of foreigners such as Brian Hodgson and Sylvain Lévi.[10] The Rana government professed to support Nepali, their mother-tongue, as the national language, but they probably regarded the systematic compilation of statistics which would reveal its status in Nepal as an unprofitable exercise.

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7. Central Bureau of Statistics, H.M.G.Nepal: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal, Kathmandu, 1977, p.22.
8. Ibid., p.24.
9. Ibid., p.22.
10. Sylvain Levi: Le Népal, Paris, 1905.

The Nepal Census of 1952-54

The first Census of the population of Nepal to include data relating to the languages of the country post-dated the political changes of 1950/1 and was dated 1952/4. It was published in late 1958, and had been compiled in two stages. In 1952, 200 supervisors were appointed, who in turn recruited 1,700 enumerators, most of whom were "local state rent collectors".[11] During 1952, data was compiled for the eastern half of the country excluding Mohottari region, and in 1954 for the western half of the country and Mohottari.[12] This Census contained three tables which were directly concerned with language:

Table 10: Mother Tongue of the Population Present by Regions.

Table 11: Percentage Distribution of the Population by Mother Tongue, by Regions.

Table 12: Languages spoken by the Population Present as a Mother Tongue and as a Secondary Language and Principal Secondary Languages spoken by Members of Each of the Language Groups.

The linguistic data presented in this Census were by no means exhaustive, and some of its categories were extremely vague and ill-defined. In Table 10, for instance, the hills were divided into Eastern Hills, Kathmandu Valley and Western Hills; no further definition of these regions was given. Similarly, the Tarai was divided into: East Inner, Eastern, Centre Inner, West Inner, Mid Western and Far Western. It is now virtually impossible to relate these regions to the modern division of the country into ancal (zones) and its sub-division into jillā (districts). The classification of many of the languages was also desultory, categories being designated Maithili Pradesh Dialects, Eastern Terai Dialects, Mid-Western Terai Dialects and so on. To explain these classifications, a footnote stated:

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11. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): Population of Nepal, Bangkok, 1980, p.179.
12. Ibid., p.178.

> "The term 'Dehati' was often used in answer to the question on language system. This refers to the local language of the area and varies from place to place. Such returns have been labelled above, according to the region, and in certain cases according to the dominant language group of the district."[13]

Methods for the collection of data were clearly inadequate and questions were probably badly-phrased, illiciting unsatisfactory replies. The somewhat vague nature of the categories of language caused many apparent discrepancies in the figures which were given. For instance, the Census recorded 300,800 speakers of Maithili and 617,000 speakers of "Maithili Pradesh Dialects". In view of the figures of over one million which later Censuses have given for Maithili, it seems that "Maithili Pradesh Dialects" were in fact Maithili itself. Similarly, the figure given for "Mid-Western Terai Dialects" (259,000) almost certainly includes a large number of Tharu speakers, "Eastern Terai Dialects" includes some speakers of Maithili, Bhojpuri and so on. Thus the figures for most Tarai languages were greatly deflated, whilst the "Regional Dialects" categories together account for some 20% of the total population of Nepal, and 63% of the Tarai population. This represented a vast amount of linguistic data which had only been superficially analysed.

The Nepal Census of 1952/54 was evidently not an exhaustive survey, for it suffered from a shortage of qualified enumerators and an uncritical attitude to unsatisfactory data. It might also be suspected that the whole operation, based as it was in Kathmandu, would have been far more efficient in its collection of accurate information in the hill regions than it was in the Tarai. There is also evidence of a certain ignorance of basic social and linguistic circumstances in the Tarai; the region was considerably harder of access than it is today, and

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13. Central Bureau of Statistics, H.M.G. Nepal: Census of Population: Nepal 1952/54, Kathmandu, 1958, p.45.

comparatively 'undeveloped'.[14] Ease of access to a region in which a survey is to be conducted must surely be a major factor influencing the value of the data which is amassed. One doubts whether the field-enumerators paid very much attention to the remote areas adjacent to the Tibetan border, for instance, which would account for the absence of any statistics relating to their languages.

Figures concerned with Nepali itself can be assumed to be fairly accurate in all these Censuses, albeit slightly inflated due to the unquestioning inclusion of all its disparate dialects. The proportion of the population of Nepal who speak Nepali as their mother tongue has remained consistently close to a half of the total in all three Censuses.

The Nepal Census of 1961

The information presented in the 1961 Census was much more compatible with that of the 1971 Census than with that of the survey which had preceded it. It adopted a more informed approach to the Tarai languages: all but one of the 'regional dialect' categories was discontinued, and the true status of the Maithili language was revealed. The omission of statistics relating to other languages tended to obscure the true situation; there was something of a political motive afoot in the way that the 1961 results were presented and interpreted. It is useful at this point to set this survey in its political context.

The issue of national language had been surrounded by some considerable controversy in the Tarai; resistance to Nepali was largely centred on Hindi, which was claimed to be a functioning lingua-franca in the region. The support for Hindi and opposition to Nepali was at its

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14. Exploitation of the natural resources of the Tarai by the Government of Nepal began in the late 18th century. (Stiller, op.cit., 1976, pp.43-6). During the 19th century, the Tarai became extremely important as a source of food, revenue and land. Schemes for the resettlement of landless hillspeople in the Tarai began during the 1960s. Joseph W. Elder (et.al): Planned Resettlement in Nepal's Terai, Kathmandu, 1976.

most vocal and politicised between 1956 and 1959[15] and it is quite possible that the change in the presentation of linguistic data may have been a response to these circumstances.

In the 1952/4 Census, a figure of 80,200 had been given for mother-tongue speakers of Hindi (representing 3% of the Tarai population) and a further 69,000 speakers of Hindi as a second language had been recorded. It is impossible to determine how many Hindi-speakers had been included in a 'regional dialect' category in 1952/4. Yet in 1961 the Census reported a total of only 2,900 mother-tongue Hindi speakers in the whole of Nepal. There are many such discrepancies between the two Censuses, but they only occur with reference to the languages of the Tarai and are only partially explicable in terms of the re-classification of the languages:

TABLE 4: Reclassification of Tarai Languages in the Census of 1961[16]

	1952/4 (Mother tongue)	1961 (Mother tongue)
Maithili Pradesh Dialects	617,400	-
Maithili	300,800	1,130,400
Bhojpuri	16,300	577,400
Eastern Tarai Dialects	460,900	-
Morang Pradesh Dialects	106,600	84,000
Bengali	9,400	10,000
Urdu	32,500	2,700
Hindi	80,200	2,900
Avadhi	-	447,100

It is quite obvious that the importance of Hindi has been greatly 'de-emphasised'. Greatly diminished figures for Hindi and Urdu are given along with figures for two related languages, Avadhi and Bhojpuri. Both of these latter languages are regarded as dialects of Hindi by the compilers of the Indian Census in New Delhi. The inclusion of Hindi, Urdu and Avadhi in this Census was curious, for it introduced an artifical

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15. Language controversies in the Tarai were documented by Frederick H. Gaige in: Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, Berkeley, 1975.
16. All figures have been given to the nearest 100 speakers.

distinction between these various forms of the north Indian lingua franca. Hindi and Urdu are written in different scripts, and they derive their technical vocabulary from different sources, but these distinctions would mean little to an illiterate respondent. In Nepal, the choice of name for the "Hindustani" lingua franca of the Tarai probably depended largely on the religious affiliations of the respondent, and the Avadhi dialect is simply a regional form of the same language. The Government explained these changes in the apparent status of languages in the following terms:

> "Overlapping, particularly among languages sharing common ancestral descent is a strong possibility for causing these differences in the presentation of the linguistic composition. Hindi, for example, has been the rallying point of Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abadhi languages predominantly spoken in the Terai. Most probably transfer of persons across Hindi to Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abadhi or their dialects is the acceptable explanation for the decline in Hindi speaking persons from 80,181 in 1952/54 to 2,867 in 1961."[17]

The treatment of data concerning the 'hill languages' differs little from that of the 1952/4 Census: the proportion of the total population who speak Tibeto-Burman languages as mother-tongues decreases slightly, against a slight increase in the number of Nepali-speakers. This is a process which continues today. The explanation offered by the Department of Statistics for these changes in the treatment of the Tarai languages is not wholly plausible. In the 1961 Census, we can see the beginnings of an attitude on the part of politically-motivated statisticians which became more readily apparent in the Census of 1971.

The Nepal Census of 1971

The third national Census of Nepal, published in 1975, included

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17. Central Bureau of Statistics, op.cit., 1977, p.46.

the most detailed compilation of linguistic data ever to have been attempted in Nepal. Table no.14, entitled "Mother Tongue of Population by Age For Zones and Districts", extends over 38 pages of Section II, Part II of the published report.[18] Data are presented for the whole country, for each of the fourteen ancal and for each of the seventy five jillā; these new divisions of the country replaced the vague regions of the earlier surveys.[19] In addition, linguistic data were distributed among eight age-groups; presumably, this was to facilitate the analysis of linguistic change over the generations.

Despite the immense detail of this survey, data were only given which enumerated the mother-tongue speakers of the following nineteen language categories:

Nepali	Newari	Rajbansi
Maithili	Magar	Satar
Bhojpuri	Rai-Kiranti	Sunuwar
Tamang	Gurung	Danuwar
Abadhi	Limbu	Santhali
Tharu	Bhote Sherpa	Local District Languages
	Other Languages	

Many of the languages for which data had been given in the previous Censuses were completely omitted from this survey and were probably subsumed into the two categories of "Local District Languages" and "Other Languages". Unfortunately, this again results in a large amount of data remaining unanalysed: there are a total of 394,400 speakers of the former and 92,700 speakers of the latter categories, according to this Census. These add up to about 5% of the population of Nepal and if the two categories are combined, they constitute the sixth most commonly spoken group of languages. The Government gives an account of its selection of languages:

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18. Central Bureau of Statistics, H.M.G. Nepal: Population Census - 1971. Vol.II Social Characteristic Tables, Part II, Kathmandu, 1975.
19. For an account of the methodology employed in this new division of administrative regions see: Ancal evaṃ Vikās Jillā Vibhājan Samitiko Prativedan, Kathmandu, 1971.

> "While information on 35 languages has primarily been collected in 1952/54 census, only 24 were tabulated. Similarly, 1961 census has collected information on 52 languages and later (these) were reduced in tabulation to 36. The 1971 census included tabulation on 17 languages leaving an unstated residue of 487,060 persons."[20]

Despite the omission of so many languages from these statistics, the greater selectivity seems to have resulted in a higher standard of analysis and presentation. Languages which were ignored fall into two categories: the first includes languages which a Nepali nationalist might regard as 'foreign'. Thus there is no mention of Hindi, Bengali, Urdu or Tibetan, but figures are given for the number of speakers of Bhojpuri, Bhote Sherpa and "Abadhi",[21] thus serving the objective of external distinction from the languages of the bordering countries. The second category of languages which are ignored is comprised of 'minor' Nepalese languages whose speakers may have decreased in number since 1961, or which are spoken in small, well-defined areas and can therefore be designated "Local District Languages". The exclusion of most of these languages from the Census also reflects the unwillingness of the Nepal Government to represent the country as linguistically diverse or fragmented. This treatment of the data thus served the end of internal cohesion.

The Nepal Census of 1981

The results of the 1981 Census will most probably not be published until 1985, but a few preliminary statistics were released to the press in 1983 and 1984. According to these, the total population of Nepal was 15,022,800. Nepali was the mother-tongue of 58.3%, Maithili of 11.1%, Bhojpuri of 7.6%, Tharu of 3.6%, Tamang of 3.5% and Newari of 3% of the population.[22]

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20. Quoted in ESCAP, op.cit., 1980, p.32.
21. Note the "Nepalised" spelling of Avadhi as Abadhi. The substitution of ba for va in devanāgarī spelling in a number of words which are shared with Hindi is felt to make them more authentically Nepali.
22. M.C.Regmi: Nepal Press Digest, Vol.27, no.45 (November 7th, 1983) and Vol.28, no.14 (April 2nd, 1984).

All in all, the three Censuses of Nepal which have so far been published provide a rather patchy and unsatisfactory body of linguistic data. Although each survey has been more thorough and detailed than its predecessor, improvements are often offset by the omission of much data which would be of interest. The conclusions one draws from this data must be modified by an understanding of the motivations of its compilers, but if a researcher bears these factors in mind, a great deal of information can be gleaned from these sources. The following survey of the languages of Nepal will make use of these Censuses, but will retain a certain amount of scepticism regarding their accuracy in some quarters.

TABLE 5: Language Statistics from the Censuses of Nepal
(Mother-Tongue Speakers Only)

	1952/4	as a %	1961	as a %	1971	as a %	1981	as a %
Total Population	8,235,079		9,412,996		11,555,983		15,022,839	
Nepali	4,013,567	48.7	4,796,528	51.0	6,060,758	52.4	8,767,361	58.3
Maithili	300,768	3.7	1,130,401	12.0	1,327,242	11.5	1,668,309	11.1
Hindi	80,181	1.0	2,867	0.03				
Bhojpuri	16,335	0.2	577,357	6.1	806,480	7.0	1,442,805	9.5
Awadhi	27	0.0003	447,090	4.8	316,950	2.7	234,343	1.6
Bengali	9,375	0.1	9,915	0.1				
Urdu	32,545	0.4	2,650	0.03				
Tharu	359,594	4.4	406,907	4.3	495,881	4.3	545,685	3.6
Danuwar	9,138	0.1	11,624	0.1	9,959	0.09	13,522	0.1
Darai	3,084	0.04	1,645	0.02				
Thami	10,240	0.1	9,046	0.09				
Majhi	5,729	0.07	5,895	0.06				
Kumhale	3,510	0.04	1,724	0.02				

	1952/4		1961		1971		1981	
Rajbansi	35,543	0.4	55,803	0.6	55,124	0.5	59,383	0.4
"Maithili Aradesh Dialects"	617,443	7.5						
"East Terai Dialects"	460,946	5.6						
"Mid-West Terai Dialects"	259,015	3.1						
"Morang Pradesh Dialects"	109,569	1.3	83,986	0.9				
"Far-west Dialects"	69,446	0.8						
Tamang	494,745	6.0	518,812	5.5	555,056	4.8	522,416	3.4
Newari	383,184	4.7	377,727	4.0	454,979	3.9	448,746	2.9
Magar	273,180	3.3	254,675	2.7	288,383	2.5	212,681	1.4
"Rai-Kiranti"	236,049	2.9	239,749	2.6	232,264	2.0	221,353	1.5
Gurung	162,192	2.0	157,778	1.7	171,609	1.5	174,464	1.2
Limbu	145,511	1.8	138,705	1.5	170,789	1.5	129,234	0.9
"Bhote Sherpa"	70,132	0.9	84,229	0.9	79,218	0.7	73,589	0.5
Chepang	14,261	0.2	9,247	0.1				
Thakali	3,307	0.04	4,134	0.04			5,289	0.03
Sunuwar	17,299	0.2	13,362	0.1	20,380	0.2	10,650	0.07
Lepcha			1,272	0.01				
Pahari	864	0.01	3,002	0.03				
Meche	523	0.006	938	0.01				
Satar	16,751	0.2	18,840	0.2	20,660	0.2	22,403	0.15
Santhal	507	0.006	10,645	0.1	3,193	0.03	5,804	0.04
Dhimal	5,671	0.07	8,188	0.1				
Jhangar	4,812	0.06	9,180	0.1				
Marwari	4,244	0.05	6,716	0.07				
Jirel	2,721	0.03	2,757	0.03				
Byansi	1,786	0.02						
Raji	1,514	0.02	801	0.008				
"Unknown"	752	0.01						
"Other Languages"	3,340	0.04			92,686	0.8	764,802	5.1
"Local District Languages"					394,374	3.4		

Chapter 3

The Current Status of the Languages of Nepal

Nepali as the Lingua Franca

Since at least as early as the 17th century, the Nepali language has developed into a fully-fledged lingua franca throughout the central and western regions of Nepal, to a slightly lesser extent in the eastern hills and increasingly in the Tarai and the northernmost mountain regions. Since 1952, all the Nepal Censuses have stated that Nepali is the mother tongue of more than half of the population, and it is clear that it is indeed the first language of Nepal, comprehensible to at least 80% of the population.

According to the Census statistics of 1971, speakers of Nepali are not in a clear majority in only six of the fourteen ancal, and speakers of any one other language constitute a majority in only two ancal. These statistics are summarised in Table 6.[1]

TABLE 6a: Nepali in the 14 ancal (zones)

Mechi	Nepali 49%	Koshi	Nepali 41%
Sagarmatha	Nepali 36%	Janakpur	Nepali 25%
Bagmati	Nepali 46%		(Maithili 50%)
Gandaki	Nepali 75%	Narayani	Nepali 21%
Karnali	Nepali 96%		(Bhojpuri 62%)
Lumbini	Nepali 49%	Rapti	Nepali 83%
Bheri	Nepali 65%	Seti	Nepali 82%
Mahakali	Nepali 88%	Dhaulagiri	Nepali 91%

TABLE 6b: Nepali in the 75 jillā (districts)

In the following 18 districts, mother tongue speakers of Nepali constitute less than 50% of the population. Where speakers of any one

1. These figures are extrapolated from the 1971 Census.

other language constitute a clear majority, their share of the population is stated.

Rasuwa	(Tamang 83%)	Banke	
Bardia	(Tharu 76%)	Saptari	(Maithili 93%)
Siraha	(Maithili 89%)	Dhanukha	(Maithili 86%).
Mahottari	(Maithili 88%)	Sarlahi	
Makwanpur		Kailali	(Tharu 81%)
Rautahat	(Bhojpuri 88%)	Bara	(Bhojpuri 93%)
Parsa	(Bhojpuri 92%)	Kapilavastu	(Avadhi 80%)
Naval Parasi		Rupendehi	
Manang	(Gurung 50%)	Sunsari	

Until recently, the policy of the Nepal Government towards languages other than Nepali seems to have been one of "benign neglect". The only published statement of official policy towards "minority languages" appeared in the Gorkhāpatra national newspaper in October 1957:

> "The General Policy of the Nepal Government Towards Languages and Dialects Current in Nepal."
>
> 1 The policy of the Nepal Government concerning the languages and dialects current in the country is both liberal and democratic.
>
> 2 The Government has not adopted, nor does it intend to adopt a policy which suppresses the language of any ethnic group or region, or which is spoken and propagated amongst any community in any part of Nepal. The Government intends that the speakers of all these languages should always retain the appropriate democratic right to further the development of the language or dialect of each Nepalese community or ethnic group.
>
> 3 There can be no doubt of the fact that Nepali has long since attained the status of an administrative language, acquiring both universality and strength. Hence, this same language appears in the present circumstances to be

a major factor favouring the promotion of national unity and the Government believes that a working knowledge of the language is utterly essential for every Nepalese citizen. Accordingly, the Government has accommodated other languages, of other regions and ethnic groups, in schools up to primary level. The intention of the Government is that, through the establishment of a Nepali medium up to the middle standard in Upper High Schools, the capabilities of Nepalese citizens and officials will be enhanced in this age of progress and democracy, as a result of their increasing proficiency in Nepali.

4 Mindful of the proportionate value and importance of the local and minority languages and dialects other than Nepali, the Nepal Government has adopted a policy which provides them with all possible aid and encouragement, in order to further their development.

5 The Nepal Government fully hopes and trusts that every Nepalese citizen alive today will heartily support this Government policy which is democratic and an aid to the building of the nation."[2]

Although Nepali was formally declared to be the national language by Chandra Shamsher in 1905, there is little evidence of any coherent formulation of policies regarding the other languages of Nepal until the National Education Plans which followed the sātsāl "revolution" of 1950.[3] The Ranas seem to have adopted a policy of intermittent repression, and their attitude towards Newari was particularly harsh. This intolerance sometimes seems to have been prompted by a kind of racial or caste prejudice; there are several references to other

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2. "Nepālmā Pracalit Bhāṣā ra Upabhāṣāharūprati Nepāl Sarkārko Sāmānya Nīti", Gorkhāpatra year 57, no.79; kārtik, 2014 V.S. (1957).
3. The political changes of 1950 are often referred to by Nepali writers as the sātsāl krānti, "The Seventh-Year Revolution", as they occurred during the year 2007 of the Vikram era.

languages as "the speech of the illiterate" or "the dialects of the jungle" in the literature of the period 1900-1950.[4] The Nepali-speaking Brahman or Chetrī dominated the administration and his arrogance has still to disappear from some official bodies:

> "It should be our purpose to make Nepali the mother-tongue of all the Nepalese people. We must transform the regional languages and turn them into Nepali."[5]

It was the imposition of Nepali as the medium of education which caused the greatest problems for the Government in the implementation of its language policy in the early 1960s, in terms of both its practical difficulty and the opposition it aroused, particularly in the Tarai. As those in the Tarai who opposed Nepali rallied around Hindi, the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley also began to assert their linguistic loyalties. Other than these, few minor languages have had their own especially vocal advocates. Newari and several Tarai languages have their own distinctive literary and cultural traditions, but few of the Tibeto-Burman hill languages even possess their own scripts. With regard to these latter, Malla states,

> "....the literacy rate in these communities is abysmally low. Where subsistence is a problem, language loyalty is a sheer luxury and language maintenance a fallacy of idealism.... For almost all of the hill peoples, there are hardly any opportunities to read their languages in school at any stage whatsoever, and there is little language tradition to fall back upon."[6]

The situation for other languages, such as Maithili, is somewhat different. In the following pages, we shall consider the effects upon the languages of Nepal of the establishment of Nepali as the national

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4. Kamal P. Malla: Nepāl Bhāṣāyā Dhvānā Saphūyā Dhalaḥ, Kathmandu, Nepāl Samvat 1099, (1978), pp.6-7.
5. Ibid., p.41.
6. Kamal P. Malla: The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.140.

language and its continuing spread as the lingua franca of the eastern Himalaya.

Indo-Aryan Languages of the Tarai

It is in the low Tarai regions of southern Nepal that Nepali speakers are numerically weakest. Sagarmatha and Janakpur zones are populated by a majority of Maithili-speakers and Narayani zone has a majority of Bhojpuri-speakers. There are also sizeable minorities of people speaking Tharu, Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Maithili in the other zones of the Tarai. The comparative scarcity of Nepali-speakers is indicative of the historical division of Nepal; because few attempts were made to integrate the Tarai into a national infrastructure until comparatively recently, 18th and 19th century administrators saw the Tarai mainly as a source of land and food.[7] Thus, the peoples of the Tarai maintained languages and cultures which were distinct from those of the hills.

In his detailed study of regional politics in the Nepal Tarai,[8] Frederick Gaige noted that the people of the Tarai occupied an ambivalent position within the Nepalese nation: most administrators were from the hill regions and were unable to distinguish between Tarai Nepalese and Indian immigrants. Consequently, both Tarai Nepalese and Indians required passports before they were allowed to travel to Kathmandu.[9] Before 1951, nationality seems to have been determined on a rather arbitrary linguistic basis: speakers of Nepali or other 'hill languages' were assumed to be Nepalese citizens, but speakers of Maithili or Hindi could well have come from across the border. Linguistic safeguards were incorporated into the 1962 Constitution: section 2 of Article 8 stated that:

"....a foreigner may qualify for the acquisition of

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7. Ludwig Stiller: The Silent Cry, Kathmandu, 1976, pp.11-20.
8. Frederick H. Gaige: Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, Berkeley, 1975.
9. Ibid., p.88.

citizenship if -

a) he can speak and write the national language of Nepal."[10]

This condition could not have been fulfilled by three-quarters of the population at that time.

The Nepalese of the Tarai have long been wary of their administrators from the hills. There is some resentment at the picture of generalised "Nepalese culture" which is presented to the outside world; this is seen as a mere amalgam of hill cultures. Throughout history the peoples of the Tarai have not been fond of the Nepali language, for it has often seemed to be the language of the hill culture which has on occasion tried to impose its rule upon them.

Despite the grievances which have been expressed from time to time in the Tarai, Nepali has now made great progress in the region. There are no instances of its having actually displaced any of the languages of the region, but bi-lingualism has become increasingly widespread over the last twenty years or so. One of the languages which has managed to co-exist with the new national language in the Tarai is Maithili.

Maithili

Maithili was once the state language of the Sen kingdom of Makwanpur which experienced a period of great prosperity in the 12th century. It is now the second language of Nepal in terms of the number of its speakers, and ancient Mithila straddles the modern Indo-Nepalese border, its northern portion being represented by the Nepalese districts of Saptari, Siraha, Dhanukha, Mohottari, Sarlahi and Rautahat.

The literary tradition of Maithili goes back substantially further than that of Nepali. The Padāvalī of the 14th century poet Vidyāpati was instrumental in providing a standardised literary form for the language. Maithili literature thrived and its influence extended

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10. Ibid., p.92.

beyond the confines of the Maithili-speaking region. The Sen rulers and their descendants were noted for their generous patronage of vernacular literature and there were a large number of Maithili poets and dramatists present at their courts.[11] The popularity of Maithili drama even spread to the courts of the Malla kings of the Kathmandu Valley during the 14th century and much of the Newari literature of that period was influenced by it.[12]

The compilers of the Nepal Censuses choose to treat Maithili as a language in its own right, and so statistics concerning the Maithili-speaking population of Nepal come readily to hand. There are seven jillā of the Tarai in which sizeable numbers of Maithili-speakers have been recorded and they constitute the majority in four of these:

TABLE 7: Distribution of Maithili-speakers in Nepal[13]

Zone (ancal)	District (jillā)	Maithili Speakers	As a %
Janakpur		630,700	49.8
	Dhanukha	284,700	86.1
	Mahottari	284,400	87.6
Sagarmatha		575,200	43.7
	Saptari	289,600	92.6
	Siraha	270,400	84.4
Koshi		105,300	12.16
	Morang	53,900	17.9
	Sunsari	51,000	22.8
Narayani		10,000	0.9
	Sarlahi	61,400	35.0

11. Jayakant Mishra: A History of Maithili Literature, Allahabad, 1949/50.
12. The development of classical Newari literature is attributed in part to the influence of the Maithil king Harisingh Deva, who fled to the Kathmandu Valley in A.D.1325. Kamal P. Malla: Classical Newari Literature. A Sketch, Kathmandu, 1982, p.2.
13. Statistics from 1971 Census, given to the nearest 100 speakers.

It is quite evident that Nepali has yet to establish itself as the lingua franca in these regions of Nepal. In the southern areas of Sagarmatha and Janakpur, Maithili is very much the dominant language and the onus remains upon the Nepali-speaker resident in these areas to speak Maithili. In fact, few of the mother-tongue Nepali-speakers there are ignorant of the local language, as they would be unable to function in or integrate with the local culture without it.[14]

The dominance of Maithili has even influenced the Nepali spoken in these districts to the extent that it is commonly referred to as 'Tarai Nepali', for it incorporates a good deal of Maithili vocabulary and many features of its intonation and accent. Tarai Nepali is felt by many to be 'rustic' or 'coarse' but it is spoken by all those who are not regularly exposed to the 'standard' Nepali of Kathmandu. Students at Janakpur campus claim to attempt to eradicate these 'impure' elements from their spoken and written Nepali.[15]

Bi-lingualism with Nepali has increased quite substantially among speakers of Maithili; education and subsequent literacy are factors which are sure to promote bi-lingualism, especially as most education above primary level is given in a Nepali medium. Although education does favour literacy in Nepali, there is much evidence which suggests that literacy in both languages goes hand in hand for educated Maithils. It is also interesting to note that Nepali-Maithili bilingualism in both speech-communities usually implies a knowledge of khaṛī bolī Hindi. In the early 1960s many claims were made for Hindi as the lingua franca of the Tarai, and speakers of Maithili would have interacted far more frequently with speakers of Bhojpuri and Avadhi than with speakers of Nepali until quite recently. Consequently, Hindi, together with its dialects, still occupies a very strong position as a language which is common to each of the speech-communities of the southern Tarai. Far

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14. Subhadra Subba: Bi-lingualism in Nepal Tarai. Report on Pilot Project No.1, Kirtipur, 1974.
15. Ibid., p.12.

more Hindi is read for pleasure than any other language in these regions, as is evident from the stocks of local book-sellers.[16] The representation of Hindi as two separate dialects in the national Censuses merely disguises its true status.

The integration of these regions into a developing nation-state with its own national language has caused the spread of Nepali. Inevitably, knowledge of the national language is essential for the purposes of education, government employment and dealings with central authorities. Nepali is the language of prestige and social advancement and as such its status will continue to be enhanced in the region. Despite the increasing bi-lingualism which has resulted, the imposition of a new official language does not represent as much of a threat to the local prevalence of Maithili as might be imagined. The Maithili speech-community is sufficiently large, well-established and culturally 'rooted' in its own distinct tradition for its language to remain comparatively undiminished in stature. The Nepal Government has never suppressed the Maithili language and its literature is currently experiencing something of a revival with the adoption of modern genres: several novels were published in 1980 and 1981.[17] Nepali works such as Munā Madan by Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā have also been translated into Maithili and there is an increasing amount of literary co-operation between writers in the two languages.[18] Maithili has also begun to receive encouragement in higher education: it is now offered for I.A., B.A. and M.A. courses at Janakpur Campus.

The major languages of the Tarai are all Indo-Aryan and thus they each have strong affinities with Nepali, and with each other. The fact that the majority of the population in these regions is Hindu, as are the ruling élites in Kathmandu, means that integration into the nation brings no great cultural changes in its wake. The question of 'Sanskritisation' cannot really arise, and linguistic change has occurred

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16. Ibid., p.15
17. Ramdayal Rakesh, personal communication, Kathmandu, 1981. (Rakesh is lecturer in Hindi at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur Campus.)
18. Subba, op.cit., 1974, p.18.

gradually and uniformly throughout most of the Tarai over the last twenty years. Nepali is very gradually replacing Hindi as a lingua franca, but this will take decades. Meanwhile, most languages will probably manage to co-exist with the national language. The situation in the hills and mountains of Nepal is much more complicated and for this reason it will be as well to consider the status of the Tibeto-Burman languages in some detail.

Tibeto-Burman Languages of the Hills

The middle-hill regions of Nepal are populated by speakers of a great variety of Tibeto-Burman languages. The extremely rugged terrain, the inaccessibility of many areas and historical factors such as migration into the region and also within it have conspired to produce a complicated linguistic pattern, which differs quite radically from that which pertains in the Tarai.

The majority of these languages are vernaculars (bolīcālīko bhāṣā)[19] which lack a written form and it is generally assumed that they were each originally spoken by a distinct ethnic group inhabiting an area which could easily be defined. Political change, later migrations and the increased mobility of these groups have complicated this simplistic pattern. The linguistic situation in the hills is made even more complex by the fact that many languages comprise a number of dialects which are frequently mutually incomprehensible. It should also be noted that speakers of many of these languages tend to inhabit those parts of the country in which Nepali has been established as a lingua franca for the longest time. They have been more "Nepalised" in linguistic terms than the inhabitants of the Tarai, as a consequence.

Several attempts have been made to classify the Tibeto-Burman languages, but agreement among scholars of the subject is not as yet unqualified. In 1909 Konow and Grierson, the compilers of the Linguistic Survey of India, observed,

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19. In conversation, Nepali scholars often go to some lengths to point out that these are simply vernacular languages with little or no literature.

> "On the whole it is impossible to classify the Tibeto-Burman dialects satisfactorily. They must have split up into many different forms of speech at a very early period, and there are numerous crossings and intercrossings."[20]

Three of the classifications of these languages which have been attempted are summarised below.

Grierson and Konow (1903-28)[21]

The Linguistic Survey of India divided the "Himalayan Languages" into two groups: Non-Pronominalizing Dialects, represented in Nepal by Magar, Lepcha, Newari, Gurung, Tamang and Sunwar, and Complex Pronominalized Dialects, a category which was further sub-divided into a Western Sub-Group and an Eastern Sub-Group. The former is only represented by Byangsi in Nepal, but the latter includes the seventeen Rai languages plus Thami, Bhramu, Limbu, Bayu, Chepang, Kusunda (now regarded as an Austro-Asiatic language) and Dhimal.

Shafer (1955, 1966)

Robert Shafer, a prominent scholar of Tibeto-Burman linguistics first posited a "Bodic" division of the Sino-Tibetan language family in 1955,[22] and based his five-volume Introduction to Sino-Tibetan[23] on the same system. This "Bodic" division was sub-divided into a) Bodish, represented in Nepal by Lepcha (west), Kham, Kagate, Sherpa (central) and Gurung, Tamang and Thakali (Gurung branch), b) West Himalayish, represented in Nepal by Byangsi and Thami, c) East Himalayish, represented in Nepal by the seventeen Rai languages, Sunwar and Limbu, d) West Central Himalayish, represented by Bayu, Chepang and Magar and e) an unclassified "Newarish" category represented by Newari.

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20. G.A.Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III Tibeto-Burman Family, Part I, Calcutta, 1909, p.10.
21. Ibid. Sten Konow was a "contributing linguist" to the Survey.
22. Robert Shafer: "Classification of the Sino-Tibetan Languages", Word, no.11 (New York 1955), pp.94-111.
23. Robert Shafer: Introduction to Sino-Tibetan, Wiesbaden, 1966-1973.

Benedict (1972)

Paul Benedict further complicated the issue in his Sino-Tibetan: A conspectus,[24] by including Gurung in the "Bodish" division of a Tibetan-Kanauri section, and Byangsi in a "Himalayish" division. Magar was described as a "Bodish-Bahing link" and Lepcha as a "Bahing-Vayu link". The other Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal were classified as belonging to a Bahing-Vayu (Kiranti) Group, which included four sub-groups, namely, Bahing sub-type, Khambu sub-type, Vayu-Chepang and Newari.

An exhaustive study of Tibeto-Burman classification would also take note of the contributions made to the field by Egerod,[25] Voegelin and Voegelin[26] and several other linguists. These are beyond the scope of this study, but the summaries given above should demonstrate the great complexity of the problem.

Warren W. Glover's statistical illustration of the relationships between a number of these languages is another study which is of interest in this context.[27] Glover attempted to quantify the affinities of a selection of Nepalese Tibeto-Burman languages by assessing the extent to which their vocabularies correlated. The vocabulary selected for comparison was that of the Swadesh 100 word list. The results of these "Cognate Counts" reinforced the theory of close links between Gurung, Thakali and Tamang, Tibetan and Sherpa, and Chepang and Newari.

Laying aside all the above considerations of linguistic affinities, and of classifications on the basis of structural characteristics, these languages may also be grouped together in terms of their current status vis-à-vis their speakers' bilingualism with Nepali, and the relative

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24. Paul K. Benedict: Sino-Tibetan: a conspectus, Cambridge, 1972.
25. Søren C. Egerod: "Sino-Tibetan Languages", Encyclopedia Britannica 16 (1974), pp.796-806.
26. Charles F. Voegelin and Florence M.R.Voegelin: Classification and Index of the World's Languages, New York, 1977.
27. Warren W. Glover: "Cognate Counts via the Swadesh list in some Tibeto-Burman Languages of Nepal", in: Occasional Papers of the Wolfenden Society on Tibeto-Burman Linguistics, vol.III, part II, Urbana, 1970, pp.23-27.

"strength" of each language in retaining its mother-tongue speakers. On this basis, the Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal may be summarily divided into four groups.

1) Those languages which have a literary tradition of some antiquity which can ensure a continuing cultural affiliation on the part of their speakers, despite the inevitability of their increasing bi-lingualism with Nepali. The only examples are Newari and Tibetan.[28.]

2) Those languages which are spoken by large numbers of people in the less accessible regions of the eastern zones of Nepal. Lacking an established literary tradition, although sometimes possessing their own distinct writing systems, they are likely to lose many mother-tongue speakers as the status of Nepali is enhanced by improved communications with the rest of the country. In these eastern regions, however, this process is not far advanced and, although bi-lingualism is increasing appreciably, it has yet to cause widespread "displacement" of the local languages. Examples are Limbu and the Rai languages.

3) Those languages which lack a literary tradition and which are spoken by people inhabiting regions in which Nepali has been the dominant lingua franca for several centuries. Speakers of such languages tend to be functioning bi-linguals, and their mother-tongues show a marked Nepali influence. Examples are Gurung, Magar and Tamang.

4) The languages of the so-called "broken tribes" of Nepal.[29] Their speakers are rapidly decreasing in number. Examples are Bayu and Chepang.

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28. Although Limbu and Lepcha both have their own scripts, their literature is obscure and has rarely been published in Nepal. Therefore it plays no part in sustaining language-loyalty among speakers of those languages.
29. The term "broken tribes" was coined by Hodgson. See: B.H.Hodgson: "Comparative grammar of the languages of the broken tribes of Nepal", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol.26, Calcutta, 1857, pp.317-485.

As a general rule, the bilingualism of Tibeto-Burman speakers with Nepali is at its maximum in the west of Nepal and it decreases eastwards, (discounting the Kathmandu Valley, which is linguistically more diverse than other regions). This is clearly linked to the western origins of the national language, and also to the expansion of political control over unified Nepal which proceeded from west to east. The degree and prevalence of bilingualism is also related to the stage which has been reached in the continuing process of Sanskritisation among any given community. In a more general Indian context, this process can be quite closely equated to "Hinduisation" and in Nepal, as we have seen, it is associated with the broader processes of cultural and linguistic "Nepalisation".

Although Tibeto-Burman linguistics is a relatively undeveloped field of study among Nepalese scholars, a number of glossaries and phonemic studies were published by the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies, in conjunction with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, between 1969 and 1972. The phonemic summaries dealt with the following languages: Sherpa, Thakali, Chepang, Newari, Sunwar, Tamang, Magar, Kham, Jirel and Khaling.[30] Three more publications attempted to devise a system by which Tibeto-Burman languages could adopt the devanāgarī alphabet.[31] This was justified in the following terms by a visiting linguist:

> "....decisions must be made as to how the language is to be written, taking into account the sometimes conflicting requirements that the minority language use the symbols available in the national script and look as much like the

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30. Austin Hale: Research on Tibeto-Burman Languages, Berlin, 1982.
31. These are: Warren W. Glover: A Devanagari spelling system for the Gurung language (Kathmandu, 1971), Burkhard Schöttelndreyer: A Devanagari spelling system for the Sherpa language (Kathmandu, 1974) and Sueyoshi Toba: A Devanagari orthography for the Khaling language (Kathmandu, 1974).

> national language as possible, and that the unique phonological system of the minority language..... must be adequately represented."[32]

These observations were made in the context of bilingual education, and the writer was clearly aware of the fact that speakers of "minority languages" would be more likely to learn the national language through the medium of their own language in devanāgarī script than by purely aural means. Alexander Macdonald was sharply critical of these ideas,

> "....reproducing non-Nepali materials in nāgarī characters risks also to play a role in the disparition of languages ....Sherpa materials, for instance, transcribed in nāgarī characters by a Nepalese researcher who does not know literary Tibetan are of little scientific utility.... Moreover the "nagarisation" which is at present in fashion underlines the trend towards sanskritisation of Nepalese culture as a whole."[33]

It is quite obvious that most studies of these languages which have been carried out in Nepal are simply means to the end of the integration of their speakers into Nepal; this is quite understandable. Yet it is regrettable that the objective study of most of these languages, and of their history and origins, has been left to a handful of western scholars and that very few Nepali scholars have taken any great interest.

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32. Beth Morton: "Towards Bilingual Education Programs for Nepal", in: Lindsay Friedman (ed.): Seminar Papers in Linguistics, Kirtipur, 1976, p.130.
33. Alexander Macdonald: Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia, Kathmandu, 1975, p.148.

Chapter 4

The Current Status of Selected Tibeto-Burman Languages of Nepal

The large number of Tibeto-Burman languages current in Nepal precludes a comprehensive account of the status of each and every one in relation to the growing dominance of the national language. Thus a selection of these languages which is felt to be representative of three of the four main groups outlined above is described in some detail in the following pages. We begin with Newari, a language which has attracted the attention of a great number of scholars by virtue of its rich literary history.

Newari

Newari was classified by Grierson as a member of the "simple or non-pronominalized" group of Himalayan dialects.[1] Its origins are probably very ancient; indeed, the very name Nepāl is clearly related to the word Newār or Newā, and once referred only to the central valley of Kathmandu.[2] Speakers of Newari continue to refer to their language as Nepāl bhāṣā and to the Valley as Nepāl. Although they are widely regarded as a homogenous and distinct ethnic group within Nepal, the Newar "race" is actually composed of a number of diverse elements who now share a common mother tongue and broad cultural affiliation.[3] It may be that the term Newār was originally used to refer to an inhabitant of the Nepal Valley who would have spoken Nepāl bhāṣā as his mother tongue prior to the spread of Gorkhālī (Nepali) in the 17th century. Although the character of their language suggests that most of the Newars must have a northern origin, there is a school of thought which ascribes to them a prehistoric homeland in the Dravidian south of

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1. G.A.Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III Tibeto-Burman Family, Part I, Calcutta, 1909, pp.177-181 and pp.214-226.
2. John Burton-Page: "The Name, 'Nepal'" in Bulletin of SOAS, Vol.16, No.3, (1954), pp.592-597.
3. "Where they have not adopted Nepali as bilinguals they have no common identity except their language", Kamal P. Malla: The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.142.

India.[4] Whether or not this can be substantiated remains to be seen, but the linguistic evidence does suggest a Himalayan origin for the majority.

Mother-tongue speakers of Newari amount to less than 4% of the total population of Nepal and so it would appear to be a typical "minority" language if judged on this purely statistical basis. Yet Newari is unusual among the languages of Nepal, for the majority of its speakers continue to inhabit one distinct region of the country. According to the 1971 Census, approximately 63% of all the Newari-speakers of Nepal live in the three jillā of the Kathmandu Valley and the central Bagmati ancal is home to about 73% of them. Elsewhere in Nepal, there are Newar communities in most market towns, such as Pokhara, Tansen and Dhankuta. The Nepalese anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista observes,

> "Newars have always travelled for trade and business, while all other groups....migrate in search of land for farming or for other employment. There have been very few Newars living in these outlying districts who have taken to agriculture as their sole occupation, whereas in Kathmandu Valley great numbers of Newars are strictly farmers."[5]

TABLE 8: Distribution of Newari-speakers in Nepal[6]

Zone	District	No. of speakers	% of total
NEPAL		455,000	3.9
Koshi		14,100	1.6
	Dhankuta	3,500	1.1
Sagarmatha		15,700	1.2
Janakpur		25,800	2.0
	Ramechap	14,300	9.1

4. Gopal Singh Nepali: The Newars, Bombay, 1965, pp.28-29. In his "Notes on the origins of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal" (in James F. Fisher (ed.), Himalayan Anthropology, The Hague and Paris, 1978), Victor S. Doherty states, "The assertion sometimes made that the Newars are connected with the Nayars of South India has no supporting evidence", (p.435).
5. Dor Bahadur Bista: People of Nepal, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1972, p.18.
6. Nepal Census 1971. Figures given to the nearest 100.

Zone	District	No. of speakers	% of total
Bagmati		331,400	22.1
	Bhaktapur	69,300	62.9
	Kathmandu	147,000	44.6
	Lalitpur	69,900	45.1
	Sindhu Palchok	14,200	6.9
	Kavre Palanchok	26,300	10.7
	Nuwakot	3,700	2.1
Narayani		21,600	2.0
	Makwanpur	14,300	8.7
Gandaki			
	Kaski	4,300	2.8
	Tanahun	9,100	5.8
	Syangja	5,400	2.0
Lumbini		14,500	1.2
	Palpa	6,900	3.3

The Newars have certainly played an important rôle in Nepalese cultural history and a just claim can undoubtedly be made for the eminence of their literary heritage. Yet Newari is often mis-represented as the "second language" of Nepal, a statement which is simply untrue in a strictly numerical sense, and is a reflection of the "Kathmandu-centric" bias of some observers and the fact that the Newars possess their own literature.

In the Kathmandu Valley, Newari was the language of a culture of unprecedented diversity and eclecticism, to which the distinctive environment of the Valley towns still bears witness. In general, the Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal lack a literate culture; ethnic groups such as the Gurung, Rai or Limbu undoubtedly possess their own traditions, but their cultures are generally of a material and functional nature. The Newars are an exception to this generalisation, for they are the only Tibeto-Burman speaking group of Nepal to have developed both a literate culture and also a material culture which is most notable for its non-functional aspects.

The aesthetic sensibilities of the Newars found their primary expression in material culture such as architecture and sculpture; literature lagged somewhat behind. Despite this, the earliest Newari text, the Mānavanyāyaśāstra, dates from 1380 A.D.,[7] predating the earliest examples of true literature in Nepali by three centuries. At first, Sanskrit texts were translated into Newari, and a commentary was often added in the same language, but original works soon began to be composed in what is now known as "classical Newari". Its richest genre was poetry, and over 1600 poetic compositions are extant in the language, dating back to 1570 A.D.[8] Quantities of prose and drama were also produced, often influenced by languages such as Maithili. Kamal P. Malla, who has done much to publicise and promote Newari literature in Nepal over the last few years, describes the content of this body of literature as,

> "a most tangible evidence of the symbiosis between a Tibeto-Burman language and the Indo-Aryan culture"[9]

At first, Newari language and literature remained quite unaffected by the political unification of Nepal which involved the conquest of each of the Newar kingdoms of the Valley in the latter half of the 18th century. The increasing dominance of the Nepali lingua-franca caused the introduction of a large number of loanwords into the spoken language, and Newari writers adapted many verbs for inclusion in their literary language.[10] There seems to have been little antagonism between speakers of the two languages, and the Shāh kings of the late 18th and early

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7. The earliest Newari inscription extant dates from 1173 A.D. Kamal P. Malla: Classical Newari Literature. A Sketch, Kathmandu, 1982, p.2.
8. Ibid., p.2.
9. Ibid., p.4.
10. "Nevārī nouns are frequently replaced by Sanskrit tatsamas which, however, made their way also into the verb part where new formations consisting of tats. + yāya or tats. + juya, that is to say, of verbal phrases, tend to fill the place of genuine Nevārī verbs." Siegfried Lienhard: Songs of Nepal, Hawaii, 1984, p.13. It seems likely, although Lienhard does not say as much, that many of these "Sanskrit tatsamas" were in fact taken from Nepali as well.

19th centuries did nothing to suppress Newari or retard the growth of its literature. In 1775, the treaty between Nepal and Tibet was written partly in Newari[11] and King Rājendra Vikram Shāh (r.1817-1847) is even said to have penned a drama in Newari.[12]

Under the Rana regime, however, and particularly whilst Chandra Shamsher was in power, the Nepali speaking élite began to discriminate against speakers of other languages, particularly the Tibeto-Burman vernaculars and, due perhaps to the proximity of the majority of Newars to the capital, especially Newari. In 1905, the French scholar Sylvain Lévi observed,

> "From generation to generation the Newari language recedes and gives place to the advantage of the Parbatiya - the language of the victors."[13]

Many Newars had been writing their language in the devanāgarī script since the 17th century and by 1910 the old Newari scripts such as rañjanā and bhūji mola had effectively died out.[14] The fortunes of the language declined still further under the Ranas; from 1940 to 1945, for instance, writing in Newari was considered virtually a treasonable offence, and many of the foremost Newari poets were sent to jail.[15] Under other rulers, too, Newari literature was suppressed or heavily censored.

In their retention of their language, the Newars have proved themselves to be a resilient speech community. They have benefitted from their demographic concentration in political and commercial centres throughout the country and they have become the most influential and literate non-Indo-Aryan group of Nepal as a consequence. Bilingualism is extremely widespread among Newari-speakers; they live in close-knit communities and it is significant that most of the Newars who no longer speak their mother tongue are those who live outside the Valley, isolated from other Newar communities. Under the Ranas, Newars struggled to

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11. Ibid., p.3.
12. Malla, op.cit., 1982, p.75.
13. Sylvain Levi: Le Népal, Paris, 1905, Vol.1, p.252.
14. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.141.
15. The most noted modern Newari poet is Cittadhar "Hṛdaya" who wrote his celebrated epic Sugatasaurabha in jail in the 1940s. Lienhard, op.cit., 1984, p.4.

maintain their literary tradition and the Government allowed the publication of Newari literature from 1946, after pressure from Indian Buddhist societies.[16] From its inception in 1951 until 1965, Radio Nepal even transmitted news broadcasts in Newari.[17] Hence Newari language and literature have experienced something of a revival since 1950; in his Bibliography, Kamal Malla lists some 1000 books published between 1946 and 1977.[18] Several Newars who have become known for their literary compositions in Nepali also write in Newari; Cittadhar "Hṛdaya" has 22 books in Newari to his credit[19] and Kedāramān "Vyathit", erstwhile Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy, has written 5 books of Newari verse.[20] About 25 literary societies are in existence,[21] the most notable being the Nepāl Bhāṣā Pariṣad and Cvasapasa,[22] and several Newari journals, including at least one daily newspaper, are published regularly in the Valley towns. Between 1952 and 1967, 26 Newari periodicals were registered with the central authorities.[23]

Kamal Malla discerns four attitudes current towards Newari: hostility on the part of the academic establishment, indifference on the part of educated Newars, condescension from Nepali speakers, and complacency from the protagonists of the language.[24] Despite this rather gloomy overview, Newars have begun to reassert their linguistic identity in Nepal. Newari publications are now more widely available in the Valley than at any other time, attempts are being made to revive usage of the old scripts and M.A. classes in Newari were recently inaugurated at Tribhuvan University.

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16. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.141.
17. The cancallation of Newari news broadcasts in 1965 provoked great protests from the Newar communities of the Valley. Kamal P. Malla, personal communication, Kathmandu 1982.
18. Kamal P. Malla: Nepāl Bhāṣāyā Dhvānā Saphūyā Dhalaḥ (Bibliography of Nepal Bhasha), Kathmandu, Nepal Samvat 1099 (1978).
19. Ibid., pp.93-96.
20. Ibid., pp.73-74.
21. Ibid., pp.97-98.
22. Lienhard, op.cit., 1984, p.4.
23. These are listed in an appendix to Grīṣmabahādur Devkoṭā: Nepālko Chāpākhānā ra Patra-Patrikāko Itihās, Kathmandu, 1967, pp.578-644.
24. Malla, op.cit., 1982, pp.1-4.

Despite long years of neglect and prevalent bilingualism with Nepali, the Newari language will almost certainly be maintained.

Limbu

Although some authors have chosen to classify the Limbu and their language as members of the Kirāntī group, which includes over a dozen fairly distinct ethnic and linguistic groups of the eastern hills, the compilers of the Nepal Censuses have distinguished between "Rai-Kiranti" and "Limbu" as if they constituted two separate and homogenous languages. Clearly these classifications conceal a group of languages which are as yet substantially unresearched. In addition, Subba asserts that "the Limbu group of languages consists of two separate languages, namely Chha Thare Limbu and Panch Thare or "proper Limbu".[25]

As is the case with most Tibeto-Burman languages, Limbu is exclusively the mother-tongue of members of the ethnic group of the same name. Although they amount to less than 1.5% of the total population of Nepal, the Limbu are a major constituent of the population of the eastern hills. The five districts in which most (88%) of Nepal's Limbu-speaking population were recorded by the Census of 1971 are represented below, together with the statistics concerning the two zones in which over 99% of Limbus reside.

TABLE 9: Distribution of Limbu-speakers in Nepal[26]

Zone	District	No. of Limbu Speakers	As a %
NEPAL		170,800	1.48
Mechi		102,500	16.6
	Taplejung	32,400	38.3
	Panchthar	51,200	35.1
	Ilam	12,800	9.2
Kosi		67,300	7.8
	Terhathum	38,000	31.9
	Dhankuta	15,800	4.8

25. Subhadra Subba: "The Languages of Nepal" in Lindsay Friedman (ed.), Seminar Papers in Linguistics, Kathmandu, 1976, p.146.
26. Figures from 1971 Census, given to the nearest 100.

Traditionally, Limbus have inhabited the region known as Pallo Kirānt or "Far Kirānt" and they refer to their homeland as Limbūwan. This is a "middle-hill" area, and few Limbus live outside it, only limited migration having taken place in an easterly direction.

The Limbus may once have had a minor literary tradition of their own; Malla notes that the Rai and the Limbus have an ancient literature of their own including a Veda,[27] and Bista states that books in the Limbu language are "scattered and difficult to find".[28] Certainly, Limbu literature barely survives, if it lives at all.

Most Limbus, however, have not forsaken their own language, and some consciously resist the acquisition of any other; these latter, however, are a minority, and bi-lingualism is increasing. A Limbu's knowledge of Nepali, and the grammatical correctness of the Nepali he is able to speak, is largely related to his economic status; those who are indebted to immigrant Hindu landlords remain subservient and largely illiterate. Two American anthropologists sum up the situation thus:

> "The lower a Limbu is on the economic scale, the less likely he is to speak Nepali. At this level, Nepali is considered to be the language of the Hindu conqueror and thus to be avoided except when communication is otherwise impossible. Limbu women, unless they are wealthy, speak Nepali less fluently than men. In Terhathum and its environs, conversations among Limbu women were mostly in Limbu, while interactions with members of other castes and ethnic groups tended to be conducted in the crude hill Nepali that most women had to learn to conduct business in the bazaar and marketplace. The women of Terhathum thought of the hill women who spoke no Nepali as backward and less sophisticated than they...."

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27. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.140.
28. Bista, op.cit., 1972, p.44. See also: R.K.Sprigg: "Limbu Books in the Kiranti Script", Akten Des Vierundzwanzigsten Internationalen Orientalisten-Kongresses München, Wiesbaden, 1959.

> "When the Limbu of wealth and rank converse among themselves, their own language is likely to be sprinkled with Nepali sentences and phrases. High-ranking Limbu rapidly lose their native vocabulary, especially words describing cultivation and commerce."[29]

It would seem that the wealthy Limbu, who had extricated himself from his subservient position, is more likely to be fluently bi-lingual than the poor tenant farmer, whose attachment to his mother-tongue is linked to a resentment of the immigrant Hindu landlords, who are still seen as intruders in Limbuwan. Clearly, some of the processes which have already reached an advanced stage among the Gurung and Magar of the west are also incipient among the Limbu speech-community. The Limbu are a less important constituent of the "Gurkha" regiments than their western counterparts, and have not migrated in very large numbers away from their homelands. As a consequence, their identification with their homeland is still strong, with a corresponding ethnic and linguistic loyalty. Because the Limbu communities of the east are more nearly intact than those of Tibeto-Burman speakers in the west, they are somewhat less susceptible to changes imposed from the "outside", that is, by the Government. More often, cultural and linguistic integration into the Nepalese nation-state comes as a voluntary response to conditions in which an individual may achieve economic or social advancement, as is the case with speakers of Thakali, a language we shall consider later in this section.

Gurung

The Gurung language can be most closely related with Magar, Tamang and Thakali,[30] and it is another Nepalese "hill-language" which can be

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29. Rex L. Jones and Shirley Kurz Jones: The Himalayan Woman, Palo Alto, 1976, p.42.
30. The relationship between these languages was firmly established by Warren W. Glover in: "Cognate Counts via the Swadesh list in some Tibeto-Burman Languages of Nepal", Occasional Papers of the Wolfenden Society on Tibeto-Burman Linguistics, Vol.III, Part II, Urbana, 1970.

closely identified with one particular ethnic group. Although the Gurung language is no longer spoken by all those who claim to be Gurungs, there can be very few members of other ethnic groups who are at all familiar with the language. Those who retain Gurung as their mother-tongue, and are prepared to declare the fact to representatives of a central authority are recorded in the 1971 Census. The number of Gurungs in Nepal who no longer have a working knowledge of their ancestral language is not disclosed.

Traditionally, the Gurungs have inhabited the foothills of the Annapurna, Lamjung and Himal Chuli ranges of the Himalaya, i.e. the middle-hill regions of central Nepal, and their origins are extremely vague, although they quite probably came from the north, as their linguistic and racial features would suggest. The 1971 Census reveals that about three-quarters of the Gurung-speakers of Nepal still inhabit their homeland in the Gandaki anchal. Elsewhere, the migration of Gurungs eastwards has resulted in small populations of Gurung-speakers in eight districts outside the Gandaki anchal. Those resident in Kathmandu, Ilam, Sankhuwa Sabha, Taplejung and Rupendehi amount to less than 8,000. In Mustang and Manang districts, figures have probably been distorted by returns from speakers of Tibetan languages, who prefer to refer to themselves as "Gurung" rather than use the somewhat derogatory term of "Bhotia".[31] Resettlement in nearly-cleared Terai lands in the Rapti Valley has resulted in the existence of a sizeable Gurung community in Chitwan district.

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31. The gradual incorporation of the Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples of Nepal into the Hindu caste hierarchy began some time before laws of caste were codified in the Muluki Ain of 1854. Integration into the Hindu society now paramount in Nepal brings economic, political and social advantages, thus the Gurung do not wish to be identified with the Bhoṭiā people of more definite Tibetan cultural and linguistic affiliation. Their success in distancing themselves from these Bhoṭiā is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that many of the Tibetan-speaking people of Manang and Mustang now describe themselves as "Gurung". Personal enquiries, Mustang district, Nepal, January 1982.

TABLE 10: Distribution of Gurung-speakers in Nepal[32]

Zone	District	Gurung-speakers	As a %
NEPAL		171,600	1.5
Gandaki		135,100	13.2
	Lamjung	36,700	26.2
	Syangja	25,600	9.5
	Kaski	25,500	16.8
	Gorkha	21,000	11.8
	Tanahun	13,000	8.2
	Parbat	9,800	8.3
	Manang	3,700	49.8
Dhaulagiri		3,500	1.3
	Mustang	3,300	12.0
Bagmati		10,900	0.07
	Dhading	8,000	3.4
Narayani		6,900	0.6
	Chitwan	6,400	3,5
Mechi		4,500	0.7
Koshi		3,800	0.4

Donald Messerschmidt, an anthropologist whose study of the Gurungs is a standard work for ethnographers in Nepal, defines three dialects of Gurung.[33] Western Gurung is spoken in the area centring on Kaski district, stretching as far east as the western edge of Lamjung district and Eastern Gurung centres on Lamjung district, stretching as far as western Gorkha district. The third dialect, Ghale, is a language as "radically more different from the true Gurung than either Tamang, Thakali or Manang...all of which are certainly regarded as separate languages."[34] In his entertaining "portrait" of an old Gurung lady, the American aidworker Broughton Coburn hints at the differences between these dialects:

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32. Figures from 1971 Census, given to the nearest 100.
33. Donald A. Messerschmidt: The Gurungs of Nepal, Warminster, 1976, p.4.
34. Ibid., p.4. See also: Warren W. Glover and John K. Landon: "Gurung Dialects", in: Papers in South-East Asian Linguistics, No.7, Canberra 1980.

"At home, Aama speaks Gurung, a Tibeto-Burman tribal language sounding similar to Tibetan, although they are mutually unintelligible. From one valley to the next and from village to village, the dialect varies enough for her to recognize the native village of strangers met on the trail simply from their accent and inflection. The Gurung that live a day's walk to the northwest of Simli and Danda speak a slightly different dialect. The Danda Gurung acknowledge their barbarisms as in fact the same language, but remark that to them it sounds as if they are all perpetually angry."[35]

The Gurungs and the Magars came into contact with the Nepali-speaking descendants of the Indo-Aryan Khas who were gaining political ascendancy in the western and central Himalaya at a relatively early stage. The ancestral Gurung kingdom of legend, in the north of Lamjung district, was ruled by a ghale king until sometime in the fifteenth century,[36] when it became a part of the powerful Lamjung kingdom under a "Nepali Rājā". Lamjung was one of the last petty kingdoms to be incorporated into the unified Nepalese state; it was formally annexed by Kathmandu in 1776.[37] Messerschmidt notes the involvement of Gurungs in the cultural and political "mainstream" of Nepalese life prior to this annexation:

"Appointment of Gurung and other tribal village headmen in the hills probably dates to an earlier time when the House of Gorkha was locally powerful only in the western hills of its origin."[38]

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35. Broughton Coburn: Nepali Aama. Portrait of a Nepalese Hill Woman, Santa Barbara, 1982, p.145.
36. "The Ghale, or Kle, are by tradition a clan of ancient kings or paramount chiefs", Messerschmidt, op.cit., 1976, p.5.
37. Ibid., p.18.
38. Ibid., p.18.

The degree of linguistic and cultural Sanskritisation which has occurred among the Gurungs would seem to bear this out. As early as 1833, Hodgson noted,

> "The Gurungs are less generally and more recently redeemed from Lamaism and primitive impurity than the Magars. But, though Gurungs and Magars still maintain their own vernacular tongues, Tartar faces and careless manners, yet, what with military service for several generations, under the predominant Khas, and what with the commerce of Khas males with their females, they have acquired the Khas language, though not to the oblivion of their own.... As they have, however, with such grace as they could muster, submitted themselves to the ceremonial law of purity, and to Brahman supremacy, they have been adopted as Hindus."[39]

This long-term interaction with the Nepali-speaking population has resulted in an increasing level of bi-lingualism with the national language, and the incorporation of much of its vocabulary into spoken Gurung. These processes, as elsewhere, are closely related to the incorporation of a tribal culture and shamanist/Buddhist religion into the more prevalent Hindu culture of Nepal. Messerschmidt notes,

> "Buddhism among the Gurungs in general is waning in the face of inroads by Hinduism; it is still strong, however, among the more northerly villages which are isolated from the main-stream of Nepali life and where traditionalism is valued more highly."[40]

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39. B.H.Hodgson: "Origin and Classification of the Military Tribes of Nepal", Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, No.17, (May 1833), pp.219-220.
40. Messerschmidt, op.cit., 1976, p.6.

Gurungs who have left their native hills tend to adopt another language within only two or three generations, unless they are living among a large Gurung community. One meets hillsmen who claim to be Gurung in and around the Kathmandu Valley, and also further to the east, but very few of them now speak their mother-tongue. Thus the Nepal Censuses give no indication of the number of ethnic Gurungs who are resident outside their linguistic "homeland". Grierson notes,

> "....they are gradually being Hinduized, and there is, at the same time, a distinct tendency among them to abandon their old dialect in favour of Khas.[41] Thus 2721 out of a total of 4502 Gurungs in Sikkim returned their language as Khas at the last census."[42]

Grierson included a sample of Gurung in his Linguistic Survey, which he had obtained from the "Nepal Durbar". Although there is no way of judging the extent to which it was a true representation of the spoken Gurung of the time, it is interesting to note that it does contain a large quantity of Nepali vocabulary. Some of this, e.g. pāpa, "sin", parameśvara, "God", mhāyā, "compassion", is adopted directly from Hindu religious terminology, but there is also much secular vocabulary, e.g. paradeśa, "other country", māye "kiss", pherī, "again", juttā, "shoes", kati, "how much", risa, "anger", samma, "up to" (postposition), bhandā, "than" (comparative postposition), and several examples of the use of Nepali verb bases to form new compound verbs, e.g. nāch-la-bā, "dancing", bājā-nhā-bā, "playing music", uḍi-di-wā-di, "squandered", etc.[43] This may well represent the speech of a Gurung resident in Kathmandu who was familiar with Nepali, but it probably gives a fair impression of the kind of linguistic admixture which is spoken by the modern Hindu Gurung.

The Gurung language possesses little or no written literature, nor does it have its own script. Messerschmidt tells of a "pseudo-history" of the Gurungs, of which several hand-written texts are said

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41. I.e. Nepali.
42. Grierson, op.cit., 1909, p.182.
43. Ibid., pp.187-188.

to exist in various villages.[44] A Nepali version of a Gurung "Vaṃśāvalī" has been published.[45]

The Gurungs and their language have undergone a long process of acculturation into the Nepalese "mainstream" which began at a very early stage, by virtue of the geographical location of most of their number, and because of their renowned military prowess. Consequently, Gurungs play a more active rôle in governmental bureaucracy than the members of any other Tibeto-Burman ethnic group besides the Newars. There are also a very large number of Gurungs in the Nepalese army, and in the "Gurkha" regiments of the Indian and British armies, and army pensions play an important part in the economy of the central Nepalese hills.[46] Despite these factors, there has been no assertion of the Gurung cultural and linguistic identity which can be even nearly equated with the vocalisation of loyalty to other languages, such as Newari. Lacking a literature, or even a distinct written form, it seems most likely that the Gurung language will continue to co-exist with the lingua-franca, Nepali, in the shape of ever increasing bi-lingualism, and will probably become progressively more "Nepali-ised" over the generations.

Thakali

Thakali is spoken by a small and scattered community who have traditionally inhabited the middle section of the Kali Gandaki valley in Mustang district of Dhaulagiri zone.[47] In the 1971 Census, Thakali was subsumed into the "local district languages" category, but some 4,100 speakers were recorded by the Census of 1961. Ethnically and linguistically, the Thakalis are more closely related to their southern neighbours, the Gurung and Tamang, than to the Tibetan peoples of the

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44. Messerschmidt, op.cit., 1976, p.9.
45. Yogī Naraharināth and Kṛṣṇabahādur Gurung (ed.): Śrīguruṅg Magar Vaṃśāvalī, Nepal, 1963.
46. A similar situation exists among the Tamang. See: Andras Höfer: "A New Rural Elite in Central Nepal", in James F.Fisher (ed.): Himalayan Anthropology, The Hague and Paris, 1978.
47. This area is known as the Thāk Kholā.

northern reaches of the Kali Gandaki. Their language has 65% cognates with Gurung and 57% with Tamang, but only 28% with Tibetan.[48] Traditionally, however, Thakali culture was quite closely allied to that of Tibet, in terms of religious affiliation and even dress and diet. The Thakalis became prosperous by virtue of their advantageous position on an important trans-Himalayan trade-route; they developed great commercial acumen and astute political instincts. Their changing fortunes in the face of the trade restrictions imposed by the Chinese after their annexation of Tibet have been the subject of several anthropological studies.[49] These changes have had profound cultural and linguistic implications; since the 1950s, the acculturation of the Thakalis into the broader spectrum of Nepalese life has occurred with unusual rapidity, due to severed links with the northern culture area.

Since the 1950s, the Thakalis have been increasingly anxious to be considered a part of Nepalese Hindu society. They have striven, with some success, to identify their ethnic origins in the Jumla region of western Nepal,[50] and they have even changed their clan names from Tibetan-sounding titles such as Chyoki, Salki, Dhimzen and Bhurki to more "Sanskritic" names such as Gauchan, Tulachan, Sherchan and Bhattachan.[51] Cultural change is also evident in the towns and villages of the Thak Khola; Tibetan dress is no longer worn and the old lha khang, Buddhist temples, in towns such as Tukuche and Marpha are in a sorry state of disrepair.[52] The fate of the Thakali language is a predictable

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48. Glover, op.cit., 1970.
49. Such as the famous study of trans-Himalayan trade by Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf: Himalayan Traders: Life in Highland Nepal, London, 1975. See also: Shigeru Iijima: Hinduization of a Himalayan Tribe in Nepal, Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers, No.29, 1963.
50. Shigeru Iijima: "Ecology, Economy and Cultural Change Among the Thakalis in the Himalayas of Central Nepal" in Iijima (ed.): Changing Aspects of Modern Nepal, Tokyo, 1977, p.84.
51. Bista, op.cit., 1972, p.90.
52. "We noticed at once that he [a lama at Tukuche] wore Nepali clothes and soon realized that he had totally abandoned his religion. He excused himself with the remark: "How can I act as lama if no one believes in me!" David Snellgrove: Himalayan Pilgrimage, Boulder (USA), 2nd edn., 1981, p.176.

corollary to this. Many Thakalis have left their "homeland" to conduct their businesses in the commercial centres of Nepal.[53] Others spend only a few months of each year in the Thak Khola, and the villages seem deserted in winter, as a consequence. Bilingualism with Nepali is therefore very widespread, especially among the young. The Japanese anthropologist Shigeru Iijima reports that Thakalis of Tukuche did not generally converse in their mother tongue, even in 1958, but used the national language in their informal conversations. He states that most teenagers were actually more fluent in Nepali than in Thakali, and that the latter language had become more of a "secret code" which was used among merchants when they were dealing with other ethnic groups.[54]

Hastened by the dislocation of trade and culture, the "Nepalisation" process is clearly discernible among the Thakalis, and proceeds with unusual rapidity. Their circumstances are by no means general to the speakers of other Tibeto-Burman languages; in the Thak Khola, there is much to be gained in economic and political terms from linguistic and cultural absorption into "Greater Nepal".

In the preceding pages, the current status of four Tibeto-Burman languages native to Nepal has been described in some detail. In terms of increasing bilingualism and "Nepalisation", Gurung is quite typical of the "western" members of the group. Much of what has been said about Gurung would also apply to the other Tibeto-Burman languages of the western hills, such as Magar,[55] and equally to Tamang,[56] the most widely-spoken Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal. Similarly, the processes which are at work among the Limbu-speaking community have close parallels

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53. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf: "Trans-Himalayan Traders in Transition", in Fisher (ed.), op.cit., 1978, pp.344-349.
54. Shigeru Iijima: "The Thakalis: Traditional and Modern" in Iijima, Bista et al: Anthropological and Linguistic Studies of the Gandaki Area in Nepal, Tokyo, 1982, p.25.
55. Speakers of Magar or Magari are very widely dispersed throughout Nepal, although approximately one quarter of their total number were recorded in the Palpa district by the 1971 Census, which recorded a total of 288,400 speakers in Nepal. Bilingualism with Nepali is probably slightly more prevalent among Magars than among Gurungs.
56. The 1971 Census recorded a total of 555,100 Tamang-speakers in Nepal, of whom approximately two-thirds lived in the three zones of Bagmati, Janakpur and Narayani. Tamangs constitute a linguistic majority in Rasuwa district of Bagmati zone.

among speakers of Rai[57] and Sunwar[58] in the eastern hills. Thakali and Newari are exceptions to the generalisations which might be made about the status of these languages; Newari, because of its literary tradition, is more resistant to the processes of Nepalisation, and the case of Thakali is a consequence of changes which are confined to the Thak Khola region, although it does have some parallels among the Sherpas of Solu Khumbu.

Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of the status of the national language itself, it might be useful to examine the status of the languages which can be identified more closely with Tibetan. These are classed together by compilers of the Nepal Censuses as "Bhote Sherpa". Sherpa is the language spoken by the Sherpas of upper Solu Khumbu; it has 51% cognates with Tibetan but is usually regarded as a language in its own right. There are approximately 20,000 speakers of Sherpa in Nepal; the 1971 Census recorded a figure of 18,400 speakers of "Bhote Sherpa" in the Solu Khumbu district, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics estimated that 14,000 speakers of Sherpa inhabited the same region.[59] The 1971 Census, however, recorded a total of 79,200 speakers of "Bhote Sherpa" for the whole of Nepal; assuming that most true Sherpas live in Solu Khumbu, it is evident that more of these languages were actually "Bhote", Tibetan, than Sherpa.

In many of the more remote districts of northern Nepal, the Tibetan language and its dialects continue to function as a lingua franca. In Mustang district, the north of Dolpa (Dolpo) district, in the Mugu and Humla districts of the Karnali zone where it borders on Tibet, and in most northern regions, knowledge of Nepali is still quite limited. Such sparsely-populated areas maintain a Tibetan culture which remains distinct from that of "Greater Nepal".[60]

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57. Termed "Rai-Kiranti" by the 1971 Census; more than half of Nepal's 232,300 speakers of the seventeen Rai languages live in the northern districts of Sagarmatha zone, the rest in Koshi and Mechi zones.
58. In 1971, there were 20,400 speakers of Sunwar or Sunuwar in Nepal; most of them lived in Janakpur and Sagarmatha zones.
59. Kent H. Gordon: Sherpa Phonemic Summary, SIL, Kathmandu, 1969.
60. For an entertaining and informative account of a journey through the Tibetan-speaking regions of Nepal, see David Snellgrove, op.cit., 1981.

Conclusion

Part One of this study has attempted to demonstrate the extreme linguistic diversity which has existed for centuries among the varied peoples of Nepal. It was this diversity which gave rise to the need for a shared "link-language", a lingua franca which would enable speakers of mutually incomprehensible languages to communicate with one another. We have seen that the increasing prevalence of Nepali has affected the status of different languages in a variety of ways. Despite a steady increase in the proportion of the Tarai population who are familiar with Nepali, it still seems most unlikely that languages such as Maithili will be displaced as the mother tongues of the majority of the population in many areas. Supporters of Nepali had also hoped that it would be able to adopt the rôle of lingua franca in the Tarai, but this rôle will not be readily relinquished by Hindi. Thus one can conclude that, although familiarity with Nepali is now much more widespread in the Tarai than it has ever been, its use will probably remain restricted to a quite limited number of definite contexts for the foreseeable future.

Nepali is much stronger in the hills. Amongst most Tibeto-Burman speaking communities, it is rapidly displacing mother-tongues and influencing the character of other spoken languages. Yet such a generalisation still requires certain qualifications. In the eastern hills, there is some resistance to the acquisition of Nepali from Rais and Limbus, and the determination of a number of educated Newars to revive and maintain their distinctive culture indicates that Newari literature is assured of a future.

This section of the present study cannot pretend to be a comprehensive survey; little has been said about Lepcha, for instance, which possesses a minor literary tradition which is experiencing something of a revival in Sikkim. Yet it is hoped that this brief summary of the languages of Nepal and the effect upon them of the growing dominance of Nepali will, as it were, "set the scene" for the account of the development of Nepali language and literature which follows.

PART TWO

THE EMERGENCE OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Chapter 5

Introduction to Nepali

The Location of Nepali-Speakers

Since the 17th century, Nepali has been the language of the majority of those Nepalese who can loosely be termed the "middle-hill peoples" of western and central Nepal. Typically, it was the mother-tongue of the predominantly Hindu population of this region, which bordered on a region populated by speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages in the north and on a region populated by speakers of other Indo-European languages in the south. Linguistic change has proceeded with increasing rapidity since the time when such a simplistic ethno-linguistic scheme was true. The main trend of this change has been an increase in the proportion of the population who speak Nepali as either a mother-tongue or a second language. Both the Nepali language and its speakers have tended to move eastwards through the region; the political and economic integration of the indigenous populations into a system dominated by Nepali-speaking Hindus has more recently encouraged the spread of the language into the northern and southern sections of the country.

Census figures concerned with mother-tongue have given the following statistics for speakers of Nepali within the kingdom of Nepal:

TABLE 11: Mother-tongue speakers of Nepali in Nepal

Year of Census	1952/4	1961	1971	1981[1]
Total population	8,235,079	9,412,996	11,555,983	15,022,839
Nepali-speakers	4,013,567	4,796,528	6,060,758	c.8,758,300
Nepali-speakers as a % of total	48.7%	51.0%	52.4%	58.3%

1. M.C.Regmi: Nepal Press Digest, vol.28, no.14 (April 2nd, 1984).

Despite any misgivings which might be entertained concerning the accuracy of these Census statistics, it remains clear that Nepali is very much the dominant language, especially when it is also noted that Maithili, numerically the second most widely-spoken language of Nepal, had only 1,327,242 speakers in 1971, comprising 11.48% of the total population.[2]

An important factor which is causing the spread of Nepali as the lingua franca is the policy of His Majesty's Government, which promotes Nepali as its rāṣṭra bhāṣā, or national language. Thus this widely spoken language is also the medium of state education, administration and government, it gives access to circles of power, business and finance, and it is the language of most of the media and the bulk of the country's literature.

Table 12 documents the distribution of Nepali-speakers within Nepal.

TABLE 12: Nepali speakers in zones and districts of Nepal

All figures extracted from Nepal Census, 1971. Where speakers of any other single language constitute 25% or more of the total population of any zone or district, their proportion of that population is given in the table. All figures are given to the nearest 100 and to the nearest 0.1%.

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2. In 1981, there were 1,668,300 speakers of Maithili in Nepali, who comprised 11.1% of the total population. Ibid.

Zone	District	Total popn.	No. of Nepali Speakers	Nepali Speakers as a %	Other languages (25% or over)
Mechi		617,800	301,600	48.8	
	Taplejung	84,700	36,400	43.0	Limbu 38.3
	Panchthar	145,800	65,000	44.6	Limbu 35.1
	Ilam	139,500	89,400	64.1	
	Jhapa	247,700	110,800	44.7	
Koshi		866,300	351,900	40.6	
	Sankhuwa Sabha	114,300	75,800	66.3	
	Terhathum	119,300	66,800	56.0	Limbu 31.9
	Dhankuta	107,600	52,400	48.7	
	Morang	301,600	102,500	34.0	
	Sunsari	223,400	54,500	24.4	Tharu 25.4
Sagarmatha		1,313,500	478,800	36.5	Maithili 43.8
	Solu Khumbu	105,300	52,700	50.0	Rai-Kirat 25%
	Bhojpur	194,500	154,700	79.5	
	Khotang	163,300	112,100	68.7	Rai-Kirat 26.1
	Okhaldunga	122,900	73,300	59.6	
	Udayapur	112,600	56,500	50.2	
	Saptari	312,600	13,000	4.2	Maithili 92.6
	Siraha	302,300	16,500	5.5	Maithili 89.4
Janakpur		1,265,800	314,600	24.9	Maithili 49.8
	Dolakha	130,000	86,100	66.2	
	Ramechap	157,300	82,400	52.4	
	Sindhuli	147,400	77,500	52.6	
	Dhanukha	330,600	22,800	6.9	Maithili 86.1
	Mohottari	324,800	18,800	5.8	Maithili 87.6
	Sarlahi	175,500	27,000	15.4	Local district languages 38.5 Maithili 35.0
Bagmati		1,497,000	844,200	56.4	
	Sindhu Palchok	206,400	117,400	56.9	Tamang 30.0
	Rasuwa	17,500	1,600	9.1	Tamang 82.9
	Nuwakot	172,700	109,000	63.1	Tamang 33.9

Zone	District	Total popn.	No. of Nepali Speakers	Nepali Speakers as a %	Other languages (25% or over)
	Dhading	236,300	189,600	80.2	
	Kavre Palanchok	245,200	143,600	58.6	Tamang 29.6
	Bhaktapur	110,200	36,900	33.5	Newari 62.9
	Kathmandu	353,800	176,100	49.8	Newari 41.5
	Lalitpur	155,000	69,900	45.1	Newari 45.1
Narayani		1,103,000	234,900	21.3	Bhojpuri 62.0
	Makwanpur	163,800	68,600	41.9	Tamang 44.1
	Chitwan	183,600	131,100	71.4	
	Rautahat	320.100	14,400	4.5	Bhojpuri 88.2
	Bara	233,400	11,400	4.9	Bhojpuri 92.6
	Parsa	202,100	9,400	4.7	Bhojpuri 91.9
Gandaki		1,023,100	768,000	75.1	
	Gorkha	178,300	144,500	81.0	
	Manang	7,400	100	1.4	Gurung 50.0 Local Distt. Langs. 33.8
	Lamjung	140,200	96,000	68.5	Gurung 26.2
	Kaski	151,700	118,100	77.9	
	Parbat	118,700	107,200	90.3	
	Tanahun	158,100	103,600	65.5	
	Syangja	268,600	198,500	73.9	
Lumbini		1,165,700	567,200	48.7	
	Nawal Parasi	146,600	26,900	18.3	Tharu 25.2
	Palpa	212,600	134,300	63.2	Magar 32.4
	Gulmi	227,700	224,600	98.6	
	Arga Khanchi	130,200	128,100	98.4	
	Rupendehi	243,300	43,500	17.9	Bhojpuri 43.0 Avadhi 28.9
	Kapilabastu	205,200	9,800	4.8	Avadhi 80.2

Zone	District	Total popn.	No. of Nepali Speakers	Nepali Speakers as a %	Other languages (25% or over)
Dhaulagiri		276,700	250,900	90.7	
	Mustang	26,900	15,000	55.8	
	Dolpa	19,100	14,600	76.4	
	Myagdi	57,900	55,900	96.5	
	Baglung	172,700	165,400	95.8	
Rapti		705,800	587,800	83.3	
	Rukum	96,200	86,100	89.5	
	Rolpa	163,000	137,000	84.0	
	Sallyan	141,500	141,200	99.8	
	Piuthan	137,300	134,800	98.2	
	Dang Deokhuri	167,800	88,600	52.8	Tharu 43.2
Karnali		188,000	180,400	96.0	
	Humla	29,500	25,500	86.4	
	Mugu	25,700	22,300	86.8	
	Tibrikot	10,000	10,000	100.0	
	Jumla	122,800	122,600	99.8	
Bheri		575,100	371,200	64.5	
	Jajarkot	86,600	86,500	99.9	
	Dailekh	156,000	153,100	98.1	
	Surkhet	104,900	102,200	97,4	
	Banke	125,700	18,800	15.0	Local Distt. Langs. 32.7 Avadhi 30.2
	Bardia	101,800	10,700	10.5	Tharu 76.1
Seti		597,100	490,800	82.2	
	Bajura	61,300	61,300	100.0	
	Bajhang	108,600	108,500	99.9	
	Accham	132,200	132,100	99.9	
	Doti	166,000	166,000	100.0	
	Kailali	128,900	22,900	17.8	Tharu 80.6

Zone	District	Total Popn.	No. of Nepali Speakers	Nepali Speakers as a %	Other Languages (25% or over)
Mahakali		361,200	318,600	88.2	
	Darchula	68,900	57,500	83.5	
	Baitadi	128,700	128,600	99.9	
	Dandheldhura	94,700	94,000	99.2	
	Kanchanpur	68,900	38,500	55.9	Tharu 42.8

Although this study will concern itself primarily with developments in Nepali language and literature which have occurred within Nepal, the importance of the contributions made by Nepalese abroad should not be under-estimated. These contributions were of particular importance during the first half of this century, when the conservatism of the Rana regime in Nepal discouraged cultural and literary advancement.

A substantial number of ethnic Nepalese are resident outside the kingdom of Nepal. Nepalese soldiers ("Gurkhas") serve in the armies of India, Britain and the United Nations; "Gurkha" regiments are stationed in Hong Kong, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and so on. In several Indian towns, a long-standing military tradition has encouraged the growth of sizeable Nepalese communities. Dehra Dun, for instance, had approximately 29,000 speakers of Nepali in 1961.[3] The largest communities of Nepalese resident outside Nepal are to be found to the east of the kingdom, in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, Sikkim, southern Bhutan and Assam. Most of them are descendants of emigrants

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3. Census of India 1961 Volume XV Uttar Pradesh. Part II C(ii) Cultural and Migration Tables, Delhi, 1965, Table C-V-Mother Tongue, pp.286-295. This assumes that "Gorkhali" (7,555 speakers) and "Nepali" (20,536 speakers) are really the same language. The fact that nearly 19,000 of these Gorkhali/Nepali-speakers are male indicates that many of them are in fact military personnel. The 1961 Census of India records a total of 79,400 speakers of Gorkhali and Nepali for the whole of Uttar Pradesh. Of these, 58,400 are male (ibid., pp.256-265).

from eastern Nepal who left the country during the 19th century. Originally, few of these migrants would have been mother-tongue speakers of Nepali, but the language has gained ground among their descendants to the extent that comparatively few of them are now familiar with any other language. The migration of large numbers of peasants from eastern Nepal is partially explicable in terms of the general eastward trend of population drift throughout the central and eastern Himalaya during the period, but it can also be attributed to the economic and political changes which were taking place in Nepal at the time.

As the Gorkhali rulers of the newly unified kingdom of Nepal consolidated their control of the eastern regions of the country, conditions for the "Kirāntī" peoples native to the area deteriorated sharply.[4] Nepali-speaking Hindus were encouraged to migrate eastward, to less densely populated regions where a certain amount of land was still unexploited by farmers. These cultivators began to encroach on the kipaṭ[5] lands which had traditionally been farmed by the peoples of the region. The military campaigns of the government were financed chiefly by land revenues, and after the Treaty of Segauli which concluded the Anglo-Nepalese wars of 1814-15 and 1816, taxes were converted to a cash medium, which was very burdensome for the peasant farmer. The indigenous peoples of eastern Nepal responded to this situation by emigrating in ever-increasing numbers, first into the far east of Nepal, and then into India.[6] As early as 1795, the Government of Nepal was

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4. There are references to the Kirāta peoples of the Himalayas in the Rig Veda, Mahābhārata and many other ancient texts. There are said to have been twenty-nine Kirāta rulers of Nepal before their subjugation by the Licchavis in the first century A.D. D.R.Regmi: Ancient Nepal, Calcutta, 1969, pp.21-25. The designations kirāt, kirātī or kirāntī are now given to the Tibeto-Burman peoples of eastern Nepal, but it is impossible to establish the precise nature of the historical links between these peoples and the kirāta of ancient times.
5. Kipaṭ was the ancient tradition according to which Rais and Limbus were permitted to cultivate certain ancestral lands free of taxes. For a more detailed explanation of this system of land tenure, see: Rex L. Jones and Shirley Kurz Jones: The Himalayan Woman, Palo Alto, 1976, p.35.
6. Richard English: Gorkhali and Kiranti: Political Economy in the Eastern Hills of Nepal, University Microfilms International, 1983, p.258.

trying to tempt back many Rais and Limbus who had fled to Purnea in Bihar.[7] By 1834 the situation had deteriorated further, so that the Government found it necessary to declare a ten-year moratorium on the repayments of loans because of the increasing indebtedness of many peasants.[8]

In 1835, the hill station of Darjeeling was ceded to the British by the Raja of Sikkim and the region soon became the centre of an expanding tea industry. This attracted a large number of migrant labourers from the adjacent areas of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The first estate was founded in 1856 and by 1876 there were 113 plantations employing some 19,000 labourers. Nepalese emigrants then made up 27% of the population of Darjeeling and half of them were "Kirāntīs" from the eastern hills.[9] Employment on tea estates was comparatively secure; in 1860, labourers earned between 4 and 8 rupees a month.[10] Whole families were employed and cash wages were often supplemented by food subsidies or grants of plots of unreclaimed jungle. In his recent study of political economy in the east of Nepal, Richard English summed up the attractions of the tea estate;

> "Emigration....meant escape from excessive revenue and corvee assessments, while resettlement promised opportunities for steady wage labor employment and a reliable supply of food grains."[11]

By 1901, 33,000 Rais were resident in Darjeeling; this represented a five-fold increase in their numbers since 1876.[12] The levels of migration dropped during the 20th century as the expansion of the tea industry slowed down. In 1960, 96% of the labour force was resident in this district and 95% were of Nepalese origin.[13] The following analysis of the languages spoken by these people was supplied by the Census of India, 1961:

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7. Ibid., p.257.
8. Ibid., p.260.
9. Ibid., p.264.
10. At that time, a month's supply of rice for one adult male cost only 2 rupees. Ibid., p.265.
11. Ibid., p.264.
12. Ibid., p.268.
13. Ibid., p.266.

TABLE 13: Languages of the Nepalese population of Darjeeling (1961)[14]

		as a % of total
Total population	624,600	
Nepali	369,100	59.1
Rai	56,800	9.1
Tamang	43,100	6.9
Limbu	17,800	2.8
Magar	17,300	2.8
Gurung	15,500	2.5
Sunwar & Jirel	4,800	0.8
Total	524,400	84.0

During the first half of this century, Darjeeling and Banaras were important centres for the development of Nepali literature. Writers were more free to publish their books and journals in India than in Nepal, where the Ranas held sway. Darjeeling Nepalese were proud of their cultural reputation, and Nepali linguistic nationalism was encouraged by men such as Paras Mani Pradhan and Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā. Nepalese in India have sought to create their own ethnic and cultural identity as bhāratīya nepālī, "Indian Nepalis", and since the 1960s they have been engaged in a campaign for the constitutional recognition of Nepali by the government of India. Although Nepali has been recognised as an Indian literary language by the Sāhitya Akādamī in New Delhi since 1974,[15] it is not included in schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution.[16] Demands for constitutional recognition have recently become more closely connected with those of political nationalists

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14. Census 1961 West Bengal. District Census Handbook Darjeeling, Calcutta, 1967, Table C-V-Mother Tongue, pp.238-255.
15. All-India Nepali Bhasha Samiti: Case for Constitutional Recognition of Nepali, Darjeeling, 1979, p.4.
16. Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution lists the languages which the Government recognises as languages of administration at state and national levels.

who demand an autonomous status for the region[17] and the Indian government, wary of separatist movements, is reluctant to make any real concessions.

Sikkim was essentially an independent kingdom with protectorate status until political instability led the Indian government to limit its autonomy in 1973 and formally to absorb it into the Indian Union in 1975.[18] It is also populated by a majority of Nepali-speakers,[19] who have "swamped" the indigenous Lepchas with successive waves of immigration since the turn of the century. The three official languages of the Sikkimese administration have included Nepali since the kingdom became the 22nd state of India. In October 1977 the State Legislative Assembly also joined the campaign for the constitutional recognition of Nepali, adopting an official resolution to that effect.[20]

Large numbers of Nepalese are also resident in the southern part of the independent kingdom of Bhutan, where their ancestors were settled by the Bhutanese government in the late 19th century.[21] According to the 1969 Census, approximately 138,000 speakers of Nepali are normally resident in Bhutan, constituting 15% of the total population.[22] If illegal residents and contracted labourers are also taken into account, the Nepalese may constitute as much as 20% of the

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17. In September 1981, a demonstration which was held in Darjeeling to demand constitutional recognition for Nepali and the establishment of an autonomous state of "Gorkhaland" ended in violence. These events were reported in local papers such as Yugalahar monthly (September 1981) and Hāmro Bhāṣā, 19th September 1981.
18. Leo E. Rose: "Modernizing a Traditional Administrative System: Sikkim 1890-1973", in James F. Fisher (ed.): Himalayan Anthropology, The Hague and Paris, 1978.
19. Supporters of Nepali claim that 77% of Sikkimese speak Nepali as their mother-tongue. All-India Nepali Bhasha Samiti, op.cit., 1979, p.5.
20. Ibid., p.5. The Sikkim State Assembly recognised Lepcha, Bhutia (Tibetan) and Nepali as state languages in the Sikkim Language Bill of 1977.
21. Leo E. Rose: The Politics of Bhutan, Ithaca and London, 1977, p.35.
22. Ibid., p.46.

population.[23] In southern Bhutan, Nepali is the mother-tongue of the majority in most areas, and the language has been afforded a place in the national education system; in 1975, English was established as the medium of education for ten years, Dzong Kha, the national language, was the second compulsory subject at all schools, and Nepali was the third, optional, language.[24]

It is difficult to obtain a reliable estimate of the total number of Nepali-speakers who are resident abroad. There are Nepalese communities in Assam, where they constitute approximately 16% of the non-Assamese-speaking population,[25] and in the Duars region, Banaras, Patna, Delhi and so on. Some Nepalese estimates go as high as 5 million, while Indian Censuses record less than 3 million. Whichever may be the truth, it will become evident in later chapters that Indian Nepalese form a distinct ethnic and linguistic group in India which is large enough to have influenced both the form of the Nepali language and the course of its literary development.

The Relationship of Nepali to other Indo-Aryan languages

Nepali is clearly a member of the North Indian group of Indo-Aryan languages which includes Hindi, Gujarati, Panjabi, Bengali and so on, and its development has been closely related to the changes which have occurred in all these languages. Yet there is a great paucity of early written material in Nepali and most attempts to identify the specific processes which have produced its modern characteristics are essentially reconstructions of linguistic history based on unprovable hypotheses and rather dubious assumptions. Although Nepali scholars are gradually ameliorating their lack of early material, by unearthing old inscriptions and manuscripts, the reconstruction of Nepali linguistic history still involves a great deal of speculation.

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23. Ibid., p.47.
24. Ibid., pp.134-135.
25. Myron Weiner: Sons of the Soil. Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India, Princeton, 1978, p.79.

It is possible, nevertheless, to identify many of the features of the general structure of modern Nepali which illustrate its close relationship with the other Indo-Aryan languages of India. Nepali grammar is sufficiently close to that of khaṛī bolī Hindi for at least one noted 19th century grammarian to have regarded it as a Hindi dialect.[26] There was some justification for this classification at the time, especially when the quantity of shared vocabulary is taken into account, and particularly as Nepali had not then established itself as a 'print-language'. None of the fundamental features of Nepali grammar have changed since then, but the development of Nepali literature, the efforts which Nepali scholars have expended to distance their language from Hindi and their argument that the relationship which exists between the two languages is not that of a major language with one of its dialects means that such a classification is no longer given any credence.

It is also important to note that many features of Nepali grammar are not shared with Hindi, but with other Indo-Aryan languages. For example, in Nepali the distinction is maintained between two forms of the verb 'to be', cha and ho, to which locative and definitive functions are ascribed respectively. A similar distinction is found in other languages, notably Bengali. Other features of Nepali grammar resemble those of languages current in north-eastern India; gender has become virtually obsolete in both written and spoken Nepali, and universally in the case of inanimate nouns. It is interesting to note that some Nepali poets continued to attribute gender to some inanimate nouns, albeit quite inconsistently, until the late 19th century. It is impossible to ascertain the extent to which this reflected the spoken language of the time, or whether it was merely an affectation inspired by the greater literary prestige of other languages which did attribute gender to inanimate nouns. The attribution of feminine gender to certain inanimate nouns in early Nepali inscriptions suggests that such usages were more common in 13th and 14th century Nepali, and that

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26. S.H.Kellogg: A Grammar of the Hindi Language, London (3rd edn.), 1938 (first published 1893).

19th century poets had re-introduced them artificially. The plural concord of adjectival endings which was also extended to some nouns in those early inscriptions[27] is now being similarly re-introduced to the written language, although it never occurs in spoken Nepali, where the suffix -harū is quite sufficient to denote plurality. The use of numeral classifiers in Nepali to distinguish between human (-janā) and inanimate or animal nouns (-vaṭā) also corresponds to similar grammatical conventions in Bengali and Bhojpuri.

Although some of the grammatical features of Nepali might remind a Hindi scholar of archaic Hindi constructions, it would be most erroneous to regard Nepali as an isolated remnant of North Indian linguistic evolution. The early history of the eastern Himalaya suggests that many features of modern Nepali were introduced by the varied groups who migrated into the region prior to the 14th century. The Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages of the autocthonous populations have had very little influence on the development of Nepali, as the Indo-Aryan immigrants invariably imposed their rule on such peoples and imbibed little of their culture.[28] The several immigrant groups who came to adopt an early form of Nepali as their mother-tongue may have contributed a number of "sub-strata" to the language which are now difficult to disentangle and define. Nepali shares many of its features with both the western and eastern members of the north Indian group of Indo-Aryan languages, although its basic structure is perhaps more akin to that of the group's western members. Although neither "isolated" nor "archaic", Nepali could perhaps be described as a "peripheral" north Indian language which has developed at some distance from the hypothetical centre of linguistic innovation.

Nepali: Its Names and Origins

The name Nepālī has been applied comparatively recently to the

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27. For instance, ālo, "field", had the plural form ālā.
28. Turner lists only thirty-two borrowings from Tibeto-Burman languages. R.L.Turner: A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language, Delhi (2nd edn.), 1980, p.932.

language which has been known under several appellations for some 700 years. Its most ancient name was probably khas kurā or khas bhāṣā, a name which is still current in some parts of the eastern Himalaya and which is reflected in the name given by Newars to the language of their conquerors: khay bhay.[29] The term khas bhāṣā obviously refers back to a rather obscure ethnic group of some antiquity who were known as the Khas. Some confusion still exists concerning the precise identity of the Khas, and the extent to which their language can be identified with modern Nepali is a matter which continues to arouse come controversy.

There are several references to the Khas or Kaśira in ancient Sanskrit literature. Grierson summarised the evidence which he had gleaned from sources such as the Mahābhārata, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Harivaṃśa Purāṇa, Maṇusmṛti, Bhārata Nātya Śāstra and the chronicle of 12th century Kashmir known as the Rājataraṅginī, and concluded that all of them indicate that the Khas had their origins in the north-west of the Indian sub-continent:

> "It is probable that they once occupied an important position in Central Asia, and countries, places and rivers, such as Kashmir, Kashgar in Central Asia and the Kashgar of Chitral were named after them.... At the same period [6th century] they had apparently penetrated along the southern slope of the Himalaya as far east as Nepal, and in the twelfth century they certainly occupied in considerable force the hills to the south, south-west and south-east of Kashmir."[30]

It now seems certain that the Khas came as immigrants to western Nepal at an undefined period of early history, and that they dominated the indigenous population there. Subsequent inter-marriage between the different groups has obscured the racial and linguistic characteristics of the original Khas. Hodgson was aware of this fact as early as 1848:

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29. T.W.Clark: "Nepālī and Pahāṛī" in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.): Current Trends in Linguistics vol.5 Linguistics in South Asia, Paris and the Hague, 1969, p.251.
30. G.A.Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India vol.IX Indo-Aryan Family. Central Group. Part IV Specimens of the Pahāṛī Languages and Gujurī, Calcutta, 1916, pp.7-8.

"The Khas are undoubtedly one of the aboriginal tribes of these mountains, however much the traces of their origin may be obscured by intermixture with the Arian Hindus.... The Khas, however, welcomed the Hindu immigrants into these mountains at a very early period, and soon became so intermixed with the Brahmanical and Kshatriya tribes....that all physical or lingual traces of their aboriginal lineage are now much weakened or obliterated. And as they have become, since the predominance of the Gorkhali dynasty in Nepal, the dominant race in a Hindu kingdom, they are themselves very anxious that those few traces should remain unnoticed. ... All Khas gentlemen in Nepal parade a Rajput origin."[31]

The most contentious issue in this field is the course of linguistic change which occurred after the arrival of the Khas in western Nepal. Early developments in this region are generally regarded as having produced the "early Nepali" which has been found in the inscriptions of the Malla kings of Jumla. Grierson felt that the contemporary form of Nepali owed little to the original language of the Khas; he suggested that the immigration of Rajputs fleeing Muslim oppression during the 12th and 13th centuries had altered the language beyond recognition:

"....the Pahāṛī languages, although with this Khaśa basis, are much more closely related to Rājasthānī. This must be mainly due to the Gūjar influence.....there are historical notices of tribe after tribe, and leader after leader, abandoning their established seats in Rajputana, and seeking refuge...in the hills...the bulk of the population of Nepal is Tibeto-Burman, and the Khas conquerors have ever been in a minority. The result has been a considerable racial mixture... While still distinctly allied to Rājasthānī, the Aryan language of Nepal presents a mixed character."[32]

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31. B.H.Hodgson: "Ethnography and Geography of the Sub-Himalayas", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.18, no.1, Calcutta, June 1848, p.546.
32. Grierson, op.cit., 1916, pp.14-15.

Grierson thus seems to have agreed with Hodgson, who believed that Nepali owed its contemporary characteristics to the influence of 12th century Rajasthani and the wholesale adoption of Tibeto-Burman vocabulary. R.L.Turner has demonstrated that this latter view is almost wholly erroneous; few features of modern Nepali can be attributed to the influence of Tibeto-Burman languages, and it has adopted very few loanwords from them. Indeed, Nepali and its early antecedents were the languages of ethnic groups who dominated the local populations; more influence was exerted by this language on Tibeto-Burman vernaculars than was returned. Turner's view was that,

> "the close resemblance noted by Grierson, of the Pahari languages with the Rajasthani is due rather to the preservation of common original features than to the introduction of common innovations."[33]

In his discusions of the origins of the Khas, the anthropologist John T. Hitchcock avoids most of the tendentious assumptions that were made by these earlier writers. Stressing the fact that the Khas were not "genetically well-defined", he suggests that they absorbed many other groups of immigrants as they spread down the Himalaya from the north-west. He also identifies two aspects of the culture of the Khas which would have set them apart from their neighbours; these were their "sense of separation from Tibetan and other trans-Himalayan populations" and their "Sanskrit-derived" language.[34] The entry of the Khas into the west of Nepal probably began during the 9th century, and it is therefore very likely that they were responsible for the establishment of the powerful Malla kingdom of Jumla, which was at the height of its power in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Yet Hitchcock notes that peculiarities in the Nepalese caste system led to the weakening of the strict conventions of caste endogamy and

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33. Turner, op.cit., 1980, p.xiii.
34. John T. Hitchcock: "An Additional Perspective on the Nepali Caste System", in: Fisher (ed.), op.cit., 1978, p.113.

functional differentiation. He claims that this led to increased intermarriage between members of the Khas groups and indigenous Magars and Gurungs. Thus the ethnic and linguistic differences between plains immigrants, Khas immigrants and indigenous peoples became progressively less distinct and a variety of "Aryan Pahāṛī" evolved, comprising elements of the languages of the dominant high-caste groups which are now difficult to separate and classify.[35] Grierson probably attributed far more influence to the languages of the Rajasthani elements of the incoming populations than was really their due. There is no reason for supposing that the language of the Khas differed radically from that of these latter, and Turner's remarks which were quoted above should therefore be borne in mind in this context.

The name khas kurā has now become closely identified with modern Nepali and is virtually an archaic synonym for the same language. Nowadays it is more commonly used by the non-Nepali speaking groups of the west, but it seems that the term retained a wider currency in its application to the Nepali language until the 19th century. T.W.Clark relates the tradition which holds that,

> "Jang Bahadur decreed that the word khas was to be discontinued and replaced by chetrī or gorkhā."[36]

Clark offers no corroborating evidence for this statement, but it would seem most likely that this formed a section of Jang's new philosophy of caste which was embodied in the Muluki Ain of 1854,[37] although this legal code did not make any prescriptions regarding the language of administration.

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35. Ibid., pp.115-116.
36. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.251.
37. Andras Höfer: The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854, Innsbruck, 1979.

In the early 19th century, the Nepali language was known under several names, the choice of appellation depending partly on the location of the speakers in question. The term khas kurā seems to have become linked with the notion of khas deśa, the land of the Khas, and was often used by residents of eastern and central Nepal to refer to the dialects of Nepali which were spoken further to the west. In 1802/3, Hamilton noted that the language of the west was "more commonly known by the name khas bhasha".[38]

The name parbate or parbatīya, "of, or belonging to, the mountains" seems to have been current at about the same time. In 1793 Kirkpatrick referred to it as "purbutti"[39] and Hamilton observed that this was the name given to the language spoken by "the mountain Hindus in the vicinity of Kathmandu".[40] The distinction which was made between khas kurā and parbatīya is confusing; it may be that it was merely a recognition of dialectal variations, where one name referred to a western variety and the other to the central dialect. Again, the name parbatīya may have been used by the peoples of the Valley to refer to the speech of the hillsmen of the neighbouring districts. It was probably not current among the Tarai populations, where hill languages could be covered safely by an unspecific term such as pahāṛī. In general, it is probably a mistake to treat these names as references to distinct dialects; terms such as parbatīya were probably used first by people inhabiting valleys or plains to refer to the language of people from the neighbouring hills.

Up until the 1920s, the most commonly used name for this language was Gorkhālī or, in its anglicised form, "Gurkhali". Indeed, it seems that the ruling élites of unified Nepal favoured and even actively encouraged the use of this term, as Gorkhālī and Gorkhā Bhāṣā were names which were directly related to their more recent origins. Their currency in official circles was accompanied by a plethora of other names for the same language among the Nepalese people: khas, khas kurā,

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38. Francis B. Hamilton: An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, Edinburgh, 1819, p.16.
39. William Kirkpatrick: An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, London, 1811, p.220.
40. Hamilton, op.cit., 1819, p.16.

khas bhāṣā, khas gorkhālī, gorkhā, gorkhā bhāṣā, gorkhālī and so on. The last two names had become quite well established among educated Nepalese by the end of the 19th century. Early writers of the language gave it less prosaic epithets; Śaktivallabh Arjyāl, translator of Hāsyakadamba (c.1798), called it the lokabhāṣā, "the worldly language", as opposed, perhaps, to Sanskrit, the language of the gods. Hīnavyākaraṇī Vidyāpati, a poet of the early 19th century, called it the rājabhāṣā, the "royal language", perhaps implying that he was dependent on royal patronage. The first poet to use the term gorkhālī was Daivajñakeśarī Arjyāl, a pandit writing in the early 19th century.[41]

The term Nepālī almost certainly originated in India, but it is a matter for conjecture whether it was coined first by the many expatriate Nepalese who lived there or by the British to refer to the language of the kingdom which bordered on their dominions. The latter is perhaps more likely, for the term gorkhālī seems to have retained its currency among Nepali-speakers in India just as long as it did within Nepal. The titles of early Indian Nepali journals such as Gorkhālī (1916), Gorkhā Mitra (1924), Gorkhā Saṃsār (1926), Gorkhā Sevak (1935) and Gorkhā (1945) demonstrate the continuing prevalence of the name.

British scholars were the first to use the term Nepālī with variations like "Naipali" or "Nepalese". The earliest example of its use is Ayton's "Grammar of the Nepalese Language" (1820).[42] The British were still rather ambivalent in their choice of names for the language, however; one school of thought seems to have preferred to name it after its country of origin, the other adopted the names given to it by its speakers in India. Thus Grierson preferred the term khas kurā, "this being the term employed in British India by the people who speak it",[43] and 1892 saw the publication of Brown's "Manual of Khas Gurkhali or Parbatiya".[44]

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41. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.54.
42. J.A.Ayton: A Grammar of the Nepalese Language, Calcutta, 1820.
43. Grierson, op.cit., 1916, p.18.
44. A.G.F.Brown: Manual of Khas Gurkhali or Parbatiya, 1892.

Amid this confusion of names, the name Nepālī gradually gained acceptance, first among the British in India and later in official circles in Nepal, although there were always some who preferred other names for the language. Perhaps it was felt that the name Nepālī was a better indication of its official status than gorkhālī, which referred to a specific kingdom. The Nepal Government evidently preferred the name by 1930, for the Gorkhā Bhāsā Prakāśinī Samiti was then restyled the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti.[45] From this time on, most official references to the language used the name Nepālī, and many of the literary ventures which were begun in the period allied themselves to it.[46]

Despite the official endorsement of the name Nepālī for what is now the national language, it has still not gained a secure place in the colloquial vocabulary. Many Nepalese, especially those for whom it is not a mother tongue, still use terms such as gorkhālī, parbatīya and even khas kurā for the Nepali language, just as many of them still use the name Nepāl only to refer to the Kathmandu Valley.[47] The currency of the official name, Nepālī will no doubt spread as the new nation becomes more unified and its national ideology more firmly established.

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45. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.252.
46. Such as the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, founded in Darjeeling in 1924.
47. John Burton-Page: "The Name, 'Nepal'", Bulletin of SOAS, vol.16, no.3 (1959).

Chapter 6

The Development of Nepali Linguistic Nationalism

Some time before their mother-tongue had evolved its modern form or acquired its present-day status, Nepali-speaking Hindus in Nepal certainly evinced a kind of ethnic, cultural and religious solidarity which closely resembled the nationalism they espouse today. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the primary manifestation of their political self-confidence was militaristic, as the kings of Gorkha extended their dominion to the east and west.[1] Yet Nepal lacked many of the attributes of a modern nation-state until the late 19th century; rather, it was regarded by the British in India as a troublesome princely state, and the military ambitions of its rulers were severely curtailed by the terms of the Segauli Treaty of 1816.[2] We shall see that the 18th and 19th centuries were a "formative" period for Nepali literature; poets expressed patriotic sentiments in terms of their devotion to the monarch in his expansionist campaigns, but Nepali nationalism still lacked the linguistic ramifications which were to become important later on. The association of this nascent national language with the emerging nation might seem obvious when it is viewed in retrospect, but it was rarely asserted by its poets until the late 19th century. The overtly nationalistic evocations of the closely related sentiments of bhāṣā prem (love of language), and deśa bhakti, (devotion to country), which are common in the Nepali literature of the late Rana period have few precedents in earlier centuries. Linguistic objectives did not become part of the new nation's aspirations until a number of important changes had occurred in the literary culture of Nepal.

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1. Ludwig Stiller: The Rise of the House of Gorkha, New Delhi, 1973, (2nd edn., Patna, 1975).
2. Ludwig Stiller: The Silent Cry, Kathmandu, 1976 (especially chap.1).

The earliest, most gradual and most fundamental of these changes was the decline in the status of Sanskrit, the traditional literary medium. Its decline was a lengthy process, and a corollary to many other cultural changes which had been occurring throughout South Asia for centuries. In northern India, the importance of Sanskrit diminished in the 16th and 17th centuries, as an increasing quantity of devotional and religious literature was produced in the vernacular languages of the region. This trend towards the vernacularisation of literature came slightly later to Nepal, and the influence of Sanskrit literary conventions lingered on in early Nepali poetry, but the effects of these changes were eventually as far-reaching in Nepal as they had been elsewhere.

Modern nationalism in South Asia was highly unlikely to take on a linguistic dimension while Sanskrit remained the dominant literary medium of Hindu society. Literacy had always been the privilege of a minority who conveyed the content of classical literature to the illiterate masses. The spoken mother-tongues of the peoples of South Asia remained largely unwritten until the medieval period.[3] Thus national distinctions which were based on linguistic differences were unlikely to arise under these circumstances. The Hindus of Nepal were not immediately distinct from their counterparts in Northern India: they partook of a common literate culture under the aegis of their higher castes and identified with one another as co-religionists accordingly. Thus religion could be expected to play a far greater rôle than language in the delineation of communities. With the advent of vernacular literatures, however, the status of spoken languages was greatly elevated. Their mutual incomprehensibility made the differences which existed between the various speech-communities more plainly evident. Such developments contributed to the evolution of political nationalism all over the sub-continent.[4]

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3. The new Indo-Aryan vernaculars of India emerged from the Prakrits in the 10th-12th centuries; the literary histories of Hindi, Bengali etc. begin in the 13th-14th centuries.
4. Separatist movements in India often adopt a linguistic nationalism; the subcontinent was divided up with reference to languages spoken in the various states after 1947, and most demands for political autonomy since that time have been made by one language group or another, e.g. Tamils, Assamese, Punjabis.

Sentiments which express and emphasise national identity must be conveyed in the vernacular language which is exclusive to the nation or community in question, not in a classical language which that community shares with others. In his perceptive and illuminating study of nationalism, Benedict Anderson notes that the "European universalism" of Latin never had a "political correlate" and he suggests that a wider "imagined community" of Christendom existed in medieval Europe, within which considerations of nationality were secondary.[5] Much the same could be said of Sanskrit and Hinduism within the Indian subcontinent, although one must be wary of the inherently generalised nature of such parallels. In Nepal, however, it is quite clear that a fully-fledged political nationalism could not have emerged without an exclusively Nepalese language in which its sentiments could be expressed. In his important essay on languages and nations, Einar Haugen asserts,

> "Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a 'vernacular' or a 'dialect', but a fully developed language. Anything else marks it as underdeveloped."[6]

Thus Nepali was required to grow into a "fully developed" language which could take its place on an equal footing alongside the national languages of other countries. It required a standard written form, a literature and national literary figures, and everything else that is supposed to be the attribute of a 'developed' language.

The first Nepali writer who could safely be described as a 'national literary figure' was Bhānubhakta Ācārya (1814-1868), of whom it has been written,

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5. Benedict Anderson: Imagined Communities, London, 1983, p.92.
6. Einar Haugen: "Dialect, Language, Nation", American Anthropologist, Vol.68, (1966), p.927.

dhanya kavi timi cāsar hāmrā[7]

"Blessed poet, you are our Chaucer!"

The very idea of a 'Nepali Chaucer' could not have evolved without at least a superficial knowledge of English literature. It illustrates one of the strangest paradoxes of this subject: one of the conditions for the development of a Nepali linguistic nationalism was a certain familiarity with foreign literatures among its proponents. Indeed, the forms of 20th-century Nepali nationalism were modelled, perhaps consciously, on those of earlier nationalisms elsewhere. As we have noted, external distinction from other nations is the first objective of this nationalism and the internal cohesion of the nation itself is secondary, a means to that end. Again, Anderson notes that the "bi-lingual intelligentsias" of emerging nations had access to "models of nation, nation-ness and nationalism" which had their origins in Europe and America.[8] The Indian Congress movement made a greater contribution to political nationalism in Nepal than any ideology or political model imported directly from further afield. Yet Indian nationalism was, to some extent, the product of a period during which a section of the population had been exposed to a western style of liberal education. Thus notions of national identity and democracy which had their origins in Europe were 'exported' to Nepal from India. Bi-lingualism among a section of Nepalese society was a prerequisite for this transmission of philosophy.

The development of formal education had been retarded by the conservatism of the Rana regime in Nepal, but a sizeable number of Nepalese nevertheless managed to procure a 'modern' education in north Indian universities from the late 19th century onwards. Bi-lingualism, and consequent familiarity with foreign literatures and philosophies, increased among this section of Nepalese society throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It found its political expression in

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7. Quoted by Indrabahādur Rāī: "Pārasamaṇijyū: Sandarbha Dārjīliṇmā Nepālī Bhāṣāko Mānakīkaraṇ", Bhāratīya Nepālī Vāṇmaya, Vol.1, no.1, Darjeeling, 1980, p.76.
8. Anderson, op.cit., 1983, p.128.

the formation of a number of political parties in the 1930s and 1940s, all of which were committed to democratic reforms.[9] It was felt quite justifiable for these nationalists to oppose their hereditary rulers. Despite the fact that the Ranas were of Nepalese origin, they could be cast quite convincingly in the rôle of near-colonialists, for they were anglicised to the extent that they almost constituted a distinct cultural group within Nepal.[10] Their anglicisation was largely a result of their dependence upon the continuation of British rule in India, which they felt would ensure their political survival. The Nepali Congress and other Nepalese political parties were clearly aware of these links: in India, nationalists opposed the colonial British, but in Nepal sentiments similar to those of the Indian Congress were expressed in opposition to the Ranas.

The Nepalese printing and publishing industry, which began at the end of the 19th century and which will be described later in this study, was instrumental in reducing the dominance of the Sanskrit language and its literary traditions in Nepalese literate culture, and in elevating Nepali to the status of a printed language. It also demonstrated the need for the standardisation of the written language. The entrance of the Nepali language into the printed book had far-reaching effects upon the nature of the language, as well as upon its status.

The nature and content of Nepali printed books have changed substantially since printing began in Nepal, reflecting an evolutionary process within Nepali literature which was closely related to the development of linguistic nationalism. Broadly stated, the trend has been away from a reliance on older 'pan-Indian' literary themes and genres, and towards a literature which is in conformity with those of

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9. The most important of these was the Nepali National Congress Party, which was expanded to include Nepalese in India in January, 1947. Leo E. Rose and Bhuwan L. Joshi: Democratic Innovations in Nepal, Berkeley, 1966, p.61.
10. Kamal P. Malla describes Rana culture as the "Civilization behind the Brick Curtain", The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.212.

other North Indian languages, but which also strives to establish a distinct Nepali literary tradition. At first, the majority of printed books were translations of Sanskrit classics such as the Mahābhārata or Bhāgavata Purāṇa, or poetic works which were inspired by the themes of Sanskrit or Persian literature. The vernacularisation of literature commenced at this very basic level, but it was not slow to depart from such classical antecendents. By the 1920s, Nepali translators were beginning to look to the vernacular literatures of North India for their source-material: to Tulsī Dās and Kabir, or to more modern authors such as Tagore, Premchand and Bankim Chandra.[11] A growing familiarity with foreign literatures has also prompted the translation of poetry and fiction by writers such as Wordsworth, H.Rider Haggard and Hans Andersen.[12] The substantial number of translations which were published between 1900 and 1950 indicate the existence of a widely-held belief among the Nepalese intelligentsia of the time that Nepali would not be a "fully developed" language until major works from foreign literatures had been translated into it. The Nepali critic Abhi Subedi refers to this with the term hīnatābodha, 'awareness of deficiency'.[13] The objectives of these translators were later enshrined in the constitutions of several literary institutions in Nepal, such as the Nepālī Bhāṣānuvād Pariṣad,[14] the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti[15]

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11. The novels of the Bengali nationalist Bankim Chandra Chattopādhyāya enjoyed great popularity in India during the 1880s. Several of them were later translated into Nepali, e.g. Candraśekhara, translated by Gambhīr Dhvaja Śāha in 1915, and Durgeśanandinī, translated by Śivapratāp Thāpā in 1934.
12. Wordsworth was a formative influence on poets such as Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā (1909-59). A Darjeeling vicar, Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān, translated a number of Hans Andersen's fairy-tales into Nepali (e.g. "The Ugly Duckling": Hāṃsko Narāmro Callāko Kathāhā, 1914, and "The Story of the Mermaid" Mānche-Mācchāko Kathāhā, 1919). Puṣkar Shamsher translated Haggard's She in 1941 and there are many other examples of such translations from English.
13. Abhi Subedi: Sirjanā ra Mūlyāṅkan, Lalitpur, 1981, p.26.
14. "Committee for Translation into the Nepali Language", established in 1942.
15. "Council for Publication of the Nepali Language", originally known as the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti, established in 1913.

and Sājhā Prakāśan.[16] All of these have sought to encourage the production of Nepali books, and to rationalise and direct the somewhat haphazard selection of materials for translation into Nepali. The logical conclusion of these developments was the increasing number of original works in Nepali which are now published each year, satisfying the nationalist's desire for an independent Nepali literature.

The objectives of Nepali linguistic nationalism were first set out in print by the editors of the many periodicals which emerged in the early decades of this century, first from India and later from Nepal. Its over-riding philosophy was expounded by two Nepalese Brahmans in a booklet entitled Gorkhā-Bhāṣā which was published in 1917.[17] The authors of this booklet exhorted their countrymen to further the progress and development of the Nepali ('Gorkhā') language in every sphere of Nepalese life.

The Selection of the National Language

We have seen that linguistic diversity has decreased appreciably in Nepal over the past two centuries as Nepali has gradually established itself as the lingua franca, despite the currency of a great number of disparate vernaculars among the population. In a recent study of language change and standardisation, W.Haas made the valid observation that general "tendencies towards linguistic unification" were bound to be strengthened throughout the world, due to the "unparalleled intensity of modern communication".[18] This generalisation is undoubtedly true with reference to linguistic unification as a worldwide process, but it is also true that the same processes have occurred as the response to slightly different factors in different places. In Nepal, for instance, the progress which linguistic unification has made is attributable primarily to social and cultural changes which occurred prior to 1900. For the people of Nepal, communications did not intensify appreciably until the 20th century, nor did nationalists attempt to promote the Nepali language until after 1900.

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16. Sājhā Prakāśan replaced the Samiti in 1964.
17. Kṛṣṇacandra Aryāl and Jagannāth Jośī: Gorkhā-Bhāṣā, Nepal, 1917.
18. W.Haas in Haas (ed.): Standard Languages, Spoken and Written, Manchester, 1982, p.14.

It was highly convenient for the Nepalese governments of the present century that Nepali had already become a de facto lingua franca in the hills long before any official pronouncement invested it with a rôle in national development. In some other developing nations, governments have been obliged to impose a link-language for the purposes of effective administration.[19] Haugen notes that from such a situation arises the "necessity of linguistically re-educating a population, with all the effort and disruption of cultural unity that this entails".[20] As Nepali was already the sole language of law and administration in Nepal by the end of the 19th century, it performed most of the functions of a national language that were open to it and the government was spared the necessity for "linguistic re-education", as approximately three-quarters of the population were already familiar with Nepali. Anderson is of the opinion that the "choice" of a national language is nearly always "gradual, unselfconscious, pragmatic, not to say haphazard" as a development.[21] The choice of Nepali was certainly more "pragmatic" than "haphazard"; it had long been tacitly regarded as the official language of government and the "choice" therefore presented itself to the government which succeeded the Ranas in 1950 as a virtual fait accompli. Kamal Prakash Malla summarised this development:

> "The political and cultural ascendancy of Nepali, first as a lingua franca and now as the national language of Nepal is.... not due to an arbitrary or abrupt political decision, nor is it due to an innate dynamism of the Nepali language vis-a-vis other languages of Nepal as such. It is a consequence of history."[22]

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19. The governments of Indonesia and India have both imposed national languages (Bahasa Indonesia and Hindi) on their linguistically diverse populations. See also: Mubanga E. Kashoki: "Achieving Nationhood through Language: the Challenge of Namibia", Third World Quarterly, vol.4, no.2 (April, 1982).
20. Haugen, op.cit., 1966, p.928.
21. Anderson, op.cit., 1983, p.45.
22. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.135.

The Legal Status of Nepali

Nepali has been tacitly recognised as the de facto official language of government and administration in Nepal since the country was unified in the late 18th century. The question of a legal or constitutional status for the language, however, could not really arise until Nepal had adopted all the trappings of a modern nation-state: this has been a development of the present century. Thus the rulers of 18th and 19th century Nepal do not appear to have deemed it necessary to issue any ordinance on the matter; a tacit recognition of the rôle the language played in their administrations seems to have sufficed.

The earliest illustration of a ruler expressing any preference for the Nepali language comes from Raṇ Bahādur Shāh (1774-1805), who objected to receiving a communication written in Maithili, possibly in the Bengali script. This letter had been forwarded to him from the Tarai by one Abhimānasingh Basnyāt who was promptly informed that he should,

> "put all the letters which come to you into your own language in the nāgarī script [before you send them on]."[23]

This was clearly a personal preference and Nepali still had no legal status in Nepal. During the period of Jang Bahadur's Prime Ministership (1846-1877), for example, Nepali appears to have been the sole language of law and administration, but the compilers of the famous Mulukī Ain of 1854, which codified Nepalese law and made it universally applicable throughout the kingdom, saw no need to adopt any general policy on language.[24]

Chandra Shamsher (Prime Minister 1901-1929) is generally reckoned to have been the first Rana formally to have declared Nepali the

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23. Harṣanāth Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī: "Nepālī Bhāṣāko Kānūnī Pṛṣṭhabhūmi", Nepālī, Vol.73 (Lalitpur, Autumn 1976), p.24.
24. Andras Höfer: The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854, Innsbruck, 1979.

language of his administration. This declaration is said to have been made in 1905,[25] but no text of the statement or any record relating to it has been published to date. It is possible that his intention was to reduce reliance on Persian for communications with Indian princely states,[26] but this is mere conjecture. The Rana Prime Ministers of this century did nevertheless seem eager to further nationalist aims, and were aware of the rôle which a strong national language could play in the particular scheme of development they envisaged. The establishment of the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in 1913, with its dual rôle of promoting and censoring Nepali literature, would seem to encapsulate the somewhat ambivalent nature of Rana linguistic nationalism. The seven administrations of 1900-1950 all attempted to further the development of their mother-tongue and its literature, but remained vulnerable to an emerging nationalist intelligentsia who eventually adopted Nepali as a symbol of national unity which could be turned against the autocracy.

Thus, although linguistic nationalism was in evidence in Nepal during the Rana period, it differed from the ideology of the government which took their place in 1950. The new administrations were at pains to form a national identity which was distinct from India. Thus the main thrust of post-1950 language policy was initially directed toward distancing the national language from Hindi. The government also felt the need to issue the occasional statement to justify the policies it had formulated on language. The philosophy of linguistic nationalism was most clear in statements regarding education policy. The following seven points were made to justify the imposition of Nepali as sole medium of education by the National Education Planning Commission of 1956;

1. If the national language is made the medium of instruction (this would avoid) preparing textbooks in any other languages.
2. It will be imperative to adopt a general policy to give status to a language which is spoken by the majority of the people.

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25. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.143.
26. The Foreign Ministry Records of the Government of Nepal contain a large number of 18th and 19th-century documents in Persian. John Whelpton: "Archives in Nepal" South Asia Research, Vol.3, no.2, London, Nov. 1983, p.81.

3. The national language will be easier to learn than Hindi. No truly Hindi-speaking people inhabit any part of the country.

4. As an official language for a long time, Nepali has been current everywhere and therefore it is not difficult for the local people to understand.

5. ....the different communities of Nepal easily understand the language....

6. Nepali bears a closer affinity to Hindi than any other local language.

7. ....to solve the problems of multiplicity of language, stress and importance will have to be laid on one language, if the integrity and sovereignty of Nepal is to be maintained.[27]

Although the first point is based on purely practical considerations for the facility of education, the others could be quoted as reasons for the adoption of Nepali as the national language in all fields, including education. The observations regarding Hindi anticipate a controversy in the Tarai during the early 1960s, where much of the population was indeed more familiar with Hindi than with Nepali.[28] The third and sixth statements represent a curiously contradictory attitude to Hindi; the third asserts, tendentiously, that no Nepalese citizen is "truly Hindi-speaking", while the sixth supports Nepali with the observation that it "bears a close affinity" to Hindi. The controversy over the status of Hindi has now died down considerably, and no longer forms a major consideration in the formulation of language policy.

King Mahendra formally declared Nepali to be the rāṣṭra bhāṣā of

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27. National Education Planning Commission, Nepal: Education in Nepal, Kathmandu, 1956, pp.62-63.
28. Frederick H. Gaige: Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, Berkeley, 1975, (especially chaps. VI and VII).

Nepal in the month of Māgh in the year 2015 of the vikram era[29] (January-February 1959). The statement followed a certain amount of debate among the leaders of the various political parties; Mātṛkāprasād Koirālā, Kāśīprasād Śrīvāstava and K.I.Singh supported Hindi, and B.P.Koirālā allowed that it should be supported in the Tarai regions.[30] Despite these objections, King Mahendra's ordinance merely set the seal of official approval on the status of the language which was accordingly transformed from a de facto lingua franca into a de jure national language.

A new Constitution, formulated in 1955/6 and promulgated in 1958, was the first to make any mention of language. All subsequent, amended, constitutions, included a statement to the effect that Nepali in the devanāgarī script was the national language. In the Constitution of V.S.2015 (1958), the clause was:

> devanāgarī lipīmā nepālī bhāṣā nepālako rāṣṭra bhāṣā hunecha.
> "The Nepali language in the devanāgarī script will be the national language of Nepal."[31]

Various commercial laws have also made mention of language. The Nepal Company Ain of 1950 recommends that every Nepalese company keep its accounts in Nepali.[32] The revised Company Ain of 1964 added that companies would be permitted to keep accounts in both Nepali and English if they so desired. In such cases, however, the law would regard the Nepali accounts as more authentic.[33]

Nepali is also the language of the law courts. Although the Sarvocca Adālatako Niyama 2019 (High Court Rule 1962) makes no stipulations regarding language in its recommendations for the appointment of advocates, pleaders, lawyers or agents, it is obvious that a sound knowledge of Nepali is essential. Advocates and lawyers are required

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29. Grīṣmabahādur Devkoṭā: Nepālko Rājanītik Darpaṇa, Kathmandu, (2nd edn.), 1979, p.411.
30. Ibid., pp.405-411.
31. Bhaṭṭarai, op.cit., 1976, p.25.
32. Ibid., p.26.
33. Ibid., p.26.

to hold an accredited university degree, and to have been employed in Nepal for at least seven years.[34] Another rule states that documents in languages other than Nepali will not be admitted as evidence in Nepalese courts until they have been translated into the national language by a person approved by the court.[35]

It is evident that Nepali is now established by law as the national language in most areas of Nepalese life. Its status as the medium of education is a little less secure, and this will be analysed in more detail in a later chapter.

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34. Ibid., pp.26-27.
35. Ibid., p.27.

Chapter 7

The Standardisation of Nepali

Functional Adequacy

The need for a national language is implicit in the development of linguistic nationalism and certain functions are prescribed for Nepali as the national language of Nepal. First, it must promote the integration of the various ethnic and linguistic groups of the country into a nation which is both linguistically uniform and distinct from the nations which surround it. Thus the main political function of Nepali is to encourage identification with the Nepalese nation-state. The Indian scholar, D.P.Pattanayak believes that the elevation of one's mother-tongue to the status of a national language is a panacea for all kinds of social evils: it brings "self-affirmation", "cultural rootedness" and bolsters group identity.[1]

Within the nation, the national language is also required to facilitate communication between administration and public, and between the various communities of Nepal. Haugen notes that the encouragement of national loyalties requires "free and rather intense communications within the nation" and thus a "single linguistic code" is essential.[2]

In order that it might be compared favourably with the languages of other nations, the national language must also possess a standard written form in which a developed body of literature has been published. This aspect of nationalist aspiration is often emulatory: the imbalance which is perceived between the status of "new" literatures and those of more "established" languages such as English, or even Hindi, must be

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1. D.P.Pattanayak: "Sociolinguistics and Language Planning' in: Friedman (ed.): Seminar Papers in Linguistics, Kirtipur, 1976, p.18.
2. Einar Haugen: "Dialect, Language, Nation", American Anthropologist Vol.68, (1966), p.928.

redressed before "inferiority complexes" on the part of the former can be expunged.

Ballabh Mani Dahal, a prominent Nepalese linguist, prescribes three more specific functions for the national language of Nepal:

"A It should be efficient to be the medium of instruction for higher education.

B It should be capable of expressing the growing demand of complex, abstract and sophisticated ideas in the field of science and technology and private and government activities.

C It should be efficient for intertranslatability so that it can operate in a similar way to international languages like English, French, German etc."[3]

The objectives which are set for the development of Nepali thus amount to its achievement of an equal status with all the other national languages of the world. As if in answer to Haugen's rather challenging statement that "a fully developed language....must meet the basic test of adequacy",[4] Dahal sets out a list of necessities for the Nepali language:

"1 A standard grammar.

2 Standard dictionaries.

3 An orthographic and spelling system which is simple and scientific.

4 A standard dialect which is fixed and simplified.

5 Standard works in the language, both original and translated.

6 ....effective measures to ensure that all Nepalese, whatever their mother-tongue, attain competence in comprehension and expression in the language."[5]

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3. Ballabh Mani Dahal: "Linguistic Perspectives and Priorities in Nepal", in: Friedman (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.156.
4. Haugen, op.cit., 1966, p.931.
5. Dahal, op.cit., 1976, p.156.

This brief list is actually quite a comprehensive categorisation of the areas in which development has progressed. Perhaps the earliest of these developments was the selection of a dialect of Nepali which was to be favoured as "standard".

A Standard Dialect

An exhaustive study of the varied dialects of Nepali has yet to be attempted; few specific dialects have been subjected to linguistic analysis, as such studies have tended to concentrate on the standard variety current in educated circles. Thus most dialects are still undefined, and Nepalese and foreign scholars have suggested a number of different classifications.

G.A.Grierson, the director of the Linguistic Survey of India, was unable to divide Nepali (his "Eastern Pahari, Khas Kurā or Naipālī") into its dialects, although he mentioned the varieties of the language which were spoken in Palpa and Darai and gave a specimen of the former.[6] Other linguists have more recently proposed a variety of classificatory schemes. Kamalā Sāṅkṛtyāyaṇa divided it into four main varieties: Eastern, Central (standard), Central dialects and Western.[7] Dayanand Srivastava adopted the same scheme,[8] but T.W.Clark[9] and Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel[10] both described three groups of dialects: western, eastern and central. Pokharel elaborated on this in his book Rāṣṭrabhāṣā ('National Language') with an additional classification of the western

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6. G.A.Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.IX Indo-Aryan Family, Central Group, Part IV Specimens of the Pahāṛī Languages and Gujurī, Calcutta, 1916, p.18 and p.75.
7. Kamalā Sāṅkṛtyāyana, in: Sāṅkṛtyāyana and Upādhyāya (ed.), Hindī Sāhitya kā Bṛhat Itihās, vol.16: Lokasāhitya, Kāśī (Banaras), 1960, p.661.
8. Dayanand Srivastava: Nepali Language. Its History and Development, Calcutta, 1962, p.xix.
9. T.W.Clark: Introduction to Nepali, London (2nd edn.), 1977, p.vii.
10. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel: Nepālī Bhāṣā ra Sāhitya, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1968, pp.44-45.

group into near-west, mid-west and far-west dialects.[11] Churamani Bandhu is more circumspect in his classification, preferring to describe three broad families of sub-dialects in western, central and eastern Nepal and he backs up these assertions with a great deal of linguistic data.[12]

It is clear from a study of these varied classifications that spoken Nepali can be divided into three main groups of dialects, on the basis of variations in pronunciation and vocabulary, and occasional minor grammatical differences:

1. **Western Nepali.** Dialects are most numerous and diverse in the far western region of Nepal. No western dialect has been thoroughly analysed and none possesses a written form. In the extreme west, there is some influence on spoken Nepali from the Kumaoni language.

2. **Central Nepali.** Central Nepal is generally regarded as the region which extends from Jumla to Sallyan. This Central group of dialects is often referred to as 'Western Nepali', as Nepalese tend to conceive of Kathmandu as the centre of their country. The names Sinjālī, Jumlī and Jumlelī which are applied to these dialects refer back to the early Nepali inscriptions which were found in this region. In an analysis of the Karṇālī dialect, Bandhu states that its vocabulary has between 81% and 87% concordance with that of "standard" Nepali. He estimates that the dialects diverged from a common ancestor sometime between the 13th and 15th centuries.[13]

3. **Eastern Nepali.** The eastern dialects are generally more homogenous than those of western Nepal and they include the "standard" variety and the important Darjeeling dialect. Pokharel states that Eastern Nepali is spoken in the region which extends from Dailekh and Sallyan in the west to Bhutan and Assam in the east, and he sub-divides it into Khasānī, Parbatī and Gorkhālī.[14] The same author states that

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11. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel: Rāṣṭrabhāṣā, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1979. pp.42-65.
12. Churamani Bandhu: Nepālī Bhāṣāko Utpatti, Lalitpur (3rd edn.), 1979, pp.57-58.
13. Churamani Bandhu: Karṇālī Lok Saṃskṛti Khaṇḍa 4 Bhāṣā, Kathmandu, 1971, p.8.
14. Pokharel, op.cit., 1979, p.41.

the sub-dialect of the Valley (Upatyakālī) is a mixture of Parbatī and Gorkhālī.[15] The Darjeeling variety of spoken Nepali achieved a measure of literary respectability when the Rev.Turnbull used it as the basis for his grammar[16] and it became the medium for a number of Bible translations. Ballabh Mani Dahal suggests that it might have a "Tibeto-Burman sub-stratum", with the loss of oblique case forms, lack of subject-verb gender concord and so on.[17]

Although the Darjeeling dialect had its own supporters early in the century, the speech of Kathmandu has long been accepted, mostly tacitly, as the basis of standard literary Nepali. T.W.Clark explained its continued prestige:

> "There is a form of Nepali speech which can be called the Kathmandu dialect.... It is the language of the schools and the Trichandra College, and consequently of educated speech in the Valley....because of its prestige as the language of educated people and because its use is being consolidated by being taught in the schools, it seems probable that when a received standard Nepali emerges it will be found to be essentially the speech of Kathmandu rather than that of the districts beyond the perimeter of the Valley."[18]

On the spoken level, the evolution of a received standard Nepali is now almost complete and an increasing number of Nepalese are becoming familiar with it. Written Nepali, too, is more or less uniform throughout India and Nepal; literacy is the most important factor speeding standardisation in the spoken language. Due to the often formal contexts of usage of written Nepali, however, a "high" variety has evolved which is becoming increasingly distant from its spoken counterpart. In fact, there could be said to be three forms of standard Nepali: the spoken norm, based on an ideal version of the Valley dialect, the ordinary written language of everyday literature and the formal "high" variety of scholars and administrators. Trends

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15. Ibid., p.44.
16. A.Turnbull: Nepali Grammar and Vocabulary, Calcutta, 1887.
17. Ballabh Mani Dahal: A Description of Nepali, Literary and Colloquial (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Poona, 1974.
18. T.W.Clark, op.cit., 1977, pp.viii-ix.

of change in the latter two varieties are proceeding in almost exactly opposite directions: in popular literature, colloquialism is becoming more highly prized, in scholarly works more and more words are being borrowed from Sanskrit or English. Dahal makes the following observation regarding the divergence of spoken and written Nepali:

> "The Kathmandu dialect has been recognised as the so-called standard dialect of Nepali. At present Nepali has only a very sketchy and traditional grammar. New innovations have taken place in the phonology and grammar of Nepali since it was written. The spread of education has made possible the entry of different dialect features into standard Nepali. Moreover, the phenomenon of Sanskritisation and Anglicisation is becoming stronger. .... These inconsistencies seen in the language must be remedied by deciding the norm of the standard dialect."[19]

Scholarly written Nepali and its high-grade spoken counterpart have diverged from the colloquial speech of Kathmandu to the extent that the situation has become almost diglossic; these two varieties of the language are quite distinct from one another and they rarely exert any influence over one another. Haas described a theoretical situation in which this divergence had occurred:

> "In some cases the division between the superposed standard and the vernaculars is almost precisely a division between writing and speech; the spoken norm that corresponds to the written standard has lost its independence...."[20]

A few scholars in Nepal have attempted to reunite "High" and "Low" Nepali by introducing "native" vocabulary instead of Sanskrit terminology;

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19. Dahal, op.cit., 1976, p.157.
20. W.Haas in: Haas (ed.): Standard Languages. Spoken and Written, Manchester, 1982, p.25.

a more detailed account of their efforts will be given later in this study. There now follows an account of the efforts which have been made to standardise Nepali.

The Standardisation of Nepali Orthography and Spelling

In the introduction to his contribution to the Nepali Linguistics Seminar of 1974, Churamani Bandhu pointed out that orthography, once standardised, changes less than pronunciation. Thus the script and spelling system of any given language become steadily less closely related to its sound system with the passage of time:

> "....the older the spelling system the worse it becomes as a phonological representation of the language but the greater the value of the system in terms of the body of literature which can be approached only through the spelling system."[21]

Nepali is now written, almost universally, in the devanāgarī script, although a system of Roman transliteration was devised by Meerendonk and is still used in Purbate magazine, an army journal published in Malaya.[22] The script which is used for all other Nepali publications is almost identical to that employed for Hindi. This fact has given rise to occasional objections, as a few 'indigenous' orthographs have thereby been ignored. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel has drawn attention to seven old Nepali consonants which are never used in the modern script.[23] Despite the objections of Nepali 'purists', it is quite true to say that the present system is perfectly adequate for the representation of modern Nepali phonology. Its only shortcoming is the inconsistent system of spellings which Nepali writers adopt.

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21. Churamani Bandhu: "Transcription and Orthography" in Friedman (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.104.
22. Ibid., p.106.
23. These 'obsolete' letters are: caricucce ca ("bird-beaked ca"), khuṭṭā jhāryo jha ("long-legged jha"), bāṭulo ba ("round ba"), khāmbe ra ("pillar ra"), hāt bhāṅcyo la ("broken-armed la"), talthoplī va ("spotted va"), and pātalo sa ("thin sa"). They are very difficult to identify. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel, op.cit., 1968, p.80.

T.W.Clark observes that the aspects of language reform which are most frequently discussed in Nepali scholastic circles are "restricted almost entirely to vocabulary and spelling".[24] Although the Nepali lexicographer Bālacandra Śarmā is complacent, merely remarking that variant spellings are a natural linguistic phenomenon,[25] orthographic inconsistency continues to inspire discussion and arouse controversy. Churamani Bandhu notes that a spelling mistake in the written work of a university student is still considered to be far more grievous than any grammatical error.[26] In fact, grammatical standardisation and the eradication of spelling inconsistencies are virtually one and the same thing in the context of the Nepali language. This concern is not new among educated Nepalese: a booklet entitled Nepālī Kasarī Śuddha Lekhne?, "How Should One Write Pure Nepali?" was first published in 1935 and became the rule-book for the Nepalese examination system in 1942.[27] Yet the rules endorsed in this booklet were almost entirely concerned with spelling.

The greatest controversy over spelling continued for decades and was concerned with the use of the virām, an orthographic device which cancels out the inherent 'a' vowel which follows each consonant in the devanāgarī alphabet. In Nepal, the virām is more commonly referred to as the halant. Those who wished to retain the halant in a standardised system of orthography argued that it was essential for the authentic representation of the sounds of the Nepali language. Those who opposed it and proposed halant-bahiṣkāra[28] did so on purely aesthetic grounds; they protested at its 'ugliness' and argued that no semantic or phonetic ambiguity could arise when a reader was already familiar with the language. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel points out a number of inconsistencies in the modern usage of the halant: the name Rām is always written without the halant i.e. Rāma, but its final vowel is not pronounced. Similarly, tara, 'but', needs no halant, because the final vowel is

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24. T.W.Clark: "Nepālī and Pahāṛī" in: Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.): Current Trends in Linguistics, vol.5. Linguistics in South Asia, Paris and the Hague, 1969, p.272.
25. Ibid., p.266.
26. Bandhu, op.cit., 1976, p.108.
27. Puṣkar Shamsher (ed.): Nepālī Kasarī Śuddha Lekhne?, Kathmandu, 1935.
28. halant-bahiṣkār is usually translated "halant-boycott".

voiced, but tar, 'cream', spelled in exactly the same way, should have the halant in order to represent its pronunciation accurately and to avoid ambiguities in its meaning.[29] Unfortunately, the halant is still used very inconsistently and, although this rarely confuses the native reader, it continues to niggle those who desire uniformity in the writing system.

A second inconsistency arises from the great variety of ways in which a single word is often spelled. T.W.Clark gives culo, cuhlo, cūlo and cūhlo for 'fireplace' and orlanu, orlinu, oṛhlanu and oṛhlinu for the verb 'to descend' as two examples.[30] The problem frequently stems from the indiscriminate way in which the hrasva and dīrgha, the long and short forms of the i and u vowels, are employed. There is often no audible difference between the pronunciation of these two forms in Nepali and so the argument cannot be concerned with the accuracy of phonetic representation; it is simply a problem of straightforward standardisation. In his Nepali Dictionary, R.L.Turner attempted to promote the short, hrasva, vowels in preference to the long, dīrgha, vowels, but to no avail.[31] Words such as ṭhulo, 'big' are still spelled in both ways: ṭhulo and ṭhūlo. Other criteria for the selection of one vowel or the other have been suggested from time to time. One suggestion was the idea that the final i or u of words which had a masculine gender should be short, and those of words with feminine gender should be long,[32] but this has no basis in grammar and leaves ample scope for many other discrepancies.

Other problems in the spelling system stem from the fact that certain consonants of the devanāgarī alphabet are interchangeable in Nepali pronunciation. The individual speaker pronounces 'sha' and 'sa' almost according to whim, but there is a definite tendency among Nepali-speakers to adopt the latter pronunciation regardless of spelling. The

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29. Pokharel, op.cit., 1968, p.81.
30. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.274.
31. R.L.Turner: A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language, New Delhi (2nd edn./1st Indian Reprint), 1980, p.xvii.
32. Bandhu, op.cit., 1976, p.111.

consonants ba and va are similarly confused; often, both are pronounced 'ba'. Thus the suggestion that a word should be spelled in accordance with its pronunciation is inadequate when pronunciation is unstandardised. The unstandardised nature of Nepali pronunciation affects its spelling, too: words containing the consonants ṣa or śa, such as akṣar or śaṅkhā, are frequently spelled with a sa, i.e. aksar and saṅkhā. In his Dictionary, Turner again attempted to establish sa as a more authentic spelling in most Nepali words,[33] but this met with little sympathy. Puṣkar Shamsher suggested that sa should be adopted in all words of indigenous origin and that loanwords from Sanskrit should retain their original spellings,[34] but no one rule has gained widespread acceptance. One can guess from the writings of many Nepali scholars that sa is beginning to be regarded as more authentically Nepali.

Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel set out his proposals for the reform of the Nepali script in 1964;[35] they were translated in full by T.W.Clark in 1969.[36] Pokharel's suggestions were based on two principles: one was to retain the syllabic (akṣarātmak) character of the script and to remove anomalies from it, the other was to convert the script to a lettered (varṇātmak) system and to standardise it by this means. There is no need for a detailed explanation of the ways in which these reforms were to have been executed, for they were largely disregarded. They do demonstrate the fairly extreme measures to which Nepali scholars were prepared to resort in order to reform their script, and Clark's comments on these suggestions are conclusive:

> "Some adaptation of the script to accord more closely with the idiosyncracies of Nepali phonology is clearly called for, as Turner has shown; but the eccentric suggestions outlined above abound in anomalies and will create more problems than they solve. In fact they solve very few....both the reformist

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33. Turner, op.cit., 1980, p.xviii.
34. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.267.
35. Pokharel, op.cit., 1968, pp.84-88.
36. Clark, op.cit., 1969, pp.274-276.

> schools entirely ignore what to my mind is the outstanding problem, that of multiple spellings; and this could be solved by a simple process of consistent selection, and without doing violence to the Devanāgarī script."[37]

The final point of inconsistency concerns word-division. In Nepali grammar, words which are morphologically separate can be joined to others to mark syntactic case and number, e.g. mānchele 'by a man', mānchehārū 'men'. These usages are now almost entirely standardised. In other cases, however, there are some conspicuous anomalies, especially in compound verb formations: khānecha and khāne cha, both meaning 'he/she/it will eat' both occur in Nepali, but khānethiyo, 'he/she/it was going to eat' is highly unusual, khāne thiyo being the preferred form.[38] Sometimes words can be joined, or not, according to their function: ghar māthi cha 'the house is above' differs greatly in meaning from gharmāthi cha, 'it's above the house'.[39] A few Nepali scholars, such as Tārānāth Śarmā, have proposed that all Nepali words should be written separately, on the grounds that it is not a "synthetic" language like Sanskrit.[40] Yet such a change would again lead to further ambiguities and solve few problems.

Many of these inconsistencies are, to some extent, inherent in the devanāgarī script, and especially in the peculiarities of Nepali orthography, where the spelling of a word can sometimes vary without any difference being made to its pronunciation. If suitable techniques are applied by compilers of grammars and dictionaries, there is no reason why spelling anomalies should not be ironed out for writers of Nepali prose. In poetry, however, the problem is less easily remedied; the adaptation of vowel-lengths to meet the dictates of metrical verse is a deeply-ingrained habit among Nepali poets. Indeed, poems by such respected poets as Lekhnāth Paudyāl are often praised for precisely these qualities of experimentalism and flexibility. As reliance on

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37. Ibid., p.276.
38. Bandhu, op.cit., 1976, p.111.
39. Ibid., p.111.
40. Ibid., pp.111-112.

metre decreases among modern poets, however, standardisation of spelling will no doubt continue to make gradual progress in both prose and verse writings.

The Problem of Vocabulary

As the new national language, Nepali is required to become adequate to perform an increasing variety of functions: nationalist aspirations demand diversification and modernisation in the national literature. The "ideal goals" of this kind of linguistic development have been defined as codification ("minimal variation in form") and elaboration ("maximal variation in function").[41] With the rapid introduction of new technology, economic theories and so on to Nepal, and the relatively sudden exposure of its literary culture to foreign ideas and philosophies, the adequacy of the language to communicate new concepts was highly questionable. Codification, the standardisation of grammar and spelling, was certainly vital to the integrity of the written language, but there was also an urgent need for elaboration, the expansion of its store of vocabulary, if the language was to become capable of performing these new functions.

Most of the technical and philosophical terminology of 'higher' Nepali has been adopted from Sanskrit, in which a ready supply of such vocabulary already exists. Sanskrit grammar also allows for the invention of new, 'synthetic', words, or for the adaptation of existing terms for use in contexts for which they were not originally intended. Technological terms in Nepali are often direct and literal translations of the original Greek or Latin words which provided the technical vocabulary for the languages of Europe, and more particularly for English. Inevitably, much of this terminology is not widely understood, and little of it has entered the spoken language. Scholarly works which employ Sanskrit terminology frequently provide English synonyms in parentheses by way of explanation.[42] Yet the adoption of Sanskrit

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41. Haugen, op.cit., 1966, p.931.
42. Especially in fields such as western medicine or engineering, for which a Nepali technical vocabulary has not yet entered general usage, even in scholarly circles.

terminology is deemed necessary to render Nepali an effective medium for the wide range of communicative activities which are prescribed for it.

The question of the 'Sanskritisation' of the Nepali language remains rather controversial; few Nepali scholars would wholeheartedly support the direction the process has taken, but most admit it to be a necessary evil. Kamal P. Malla is critical of such attitudes:

> "....the paradox of Nepali linguistic nationalism is that the broader the scope of Nepali, the less it sounds like a language of Nepal. Nationalism in Nepal, in so far as it is manifestly anti-Indian in orientation, is a self-defeating aspiration, particularly when one of its major foundations is Nepali, which is bound to be increasingly Sanskritized."[43]

Part of the problem is that Nepali shares a great deal of its Sanskrit terminology with Hindi and distinctions between the two languages are thereby diminished. Some nationalists equate 'Sanskritisation' with 'Indianisation' and a number of Nepali scholars feel that much of the required vocabulary could be gleaned or adapted from existing Nepali dialects, or from other Nepalese languages such as Newari. In their opinion, Sanskrit should be regarded as the last resort, if the distinctiveness they claim for their national language is to be maintained. T.W.Clark has quoted Puṣkar Shamsher on this subject:

> "He alleged....that there was a growing tendency on the part of Sanskrit-educated Nepalese to divide the Nepali vocabulary into "polished" and "unpolished" categories; and to despise native Nepali words as "unpolished" and replace them by Sanskrit borrowings. He cited as examples the preference in some quarters for pati/patnī 'husband/wife' as against logne/svāsnī or joi/poi; for jīvit 'alive' as against jiũdo."[44]

The tendency to replace 'foreign' words such as kalam 'pen'[45] with

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43. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.144.
44. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.273.
45. The ubiquitous north Indian word for a pen, adopted by Nepali from Arabic via Hindi/Urdu.

newly-coined Sanskrit words such as lekhnī is strong. Although such terms rarely catch on in the spoken language, Sanskrit words have been devised for almost every appurtenance of modern life, from the typewriter to the helicopter.[46] These "Sanskritic neologisms"[47] are also criticised; T.W.Clark quoted Hṛdayacandra Singh Pradhān:

> "If we manage to acquire somebody's inventions, we should keep his name for it, if only as a sort of reward for the inventor."[48]

The discontentment of many educated Nepalese with the form which their scholarly and official language was adopting led to the foundation of a semi-formal school of thought known as Jharrovād, 'Purism' in the early 1960's. One of the foremost Jharrovādī scholars is Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel, who set out the following observations in 1964:

> "1) To discriminate between that which is rural and that which is sophisticated and to despise the vocabulary used in the villages is to prevent the Nepali language from standing on its own feet.
>
> 2) There is nothing wrong with borrowing, but it is not good to borrow excessively.
>
> 3) The school of thought which maintains that Sanskrit is the mother of Nepali and that all the words in a Sanskrit dictionary may therefore be used in the Nepali language is highly inappropriate.
>
> 4) Just as there are many citizens in a country, there are many words in a language. These words are citizens of the world of language. Once a man is a citizen of Nepal, no matter whence he has come, he must observe Nepalese law. Similarly, whether a word be of Sanskrit origin or English, its spelling must be set with respect to the spelling of other Nepali words.

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46. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.273.
47. Ibid., p.273.
48. Ibid., p.273.

5) In any given neighbourhood, more than one language is usually spoken and so it is inevitable that there should be many similarities and common usages among these languages....no one language can feel itself to be special, because of these shared characteristics. We can take as an example the tatsam[49] words from Sanskrit, and Arabic, Persian and English loanwords. These are common to Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and others. This shared vocabulary has its own importance, but it does not fill out the body of a language. This is only achieved when the true value of its individuality is also acknowledged. The special characteristics of a language represent its individuality, so it is unfitting to regard these special features as coarse, or to call them "rustic"."[50]

On the basis of these observations, Pokharel enumerated the methods with which the Jharrovādīs hoped to retain the individuality of Nepali:

"a) To take words which are virtually dead from the pages of history and attempt to re-establish their currency.

b) To fulfill the lack of vocabulary by gleaning words from the local dialects of western and eastern Nepal.

c) To create new words artificially on the basis of current Nepali vocabulary.

d) To create words from Sanskrit sources which were not the same as words in Hindi etc.

e) To make spelling as easy as possible.

f) To establish the Nepali taddhitapuchre and kṛtpuchre suffixes.[51]

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49. tatsams are words of Sanskrit origin used by modern vernacular languages in their original forms.
50. Pokharel, op.cit., 1968, pp.25-26.
51. Ibid., p.26. These are obscure terms which are not used elsewhere; they probably refer to postpositions and agentive suffixes.

Recommendations a) and d) were uncontroversial and they had already been partially implemented, although the great variety of Sanskrit vocabulary which had already been adopted by Hindi made the latter ideal virtually impossible to fulfill when few alternative terms existed. Recommendation b) was widely endorsed although some scholars, such as Cūḍanāth Bhaṭṭarāī, accused it of encouraging "coarseness".[52] All the other proposals were roundly condemned as unrealistic, idealistic and retrogressive.

Although the Jharrovādī school was well-known and quite influential, none of its aims have been fully adopted by the academic establishment. A few unorthodox grammars have been published,[53] and a number of writers have consciously striven to adopt 'native' vocabulary in their stories, novels and articles. Such innovations were unlikely to become widely accepted without endorsement from the higher authorities who commissioned the compilation of dictionaries and grammars. This was not forthcoming; thus the Purist school retains some noted supporters, such as Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel and Tārānāth Śarmā, but its influence is severely limited. The Sanskritisation of the written language continues apace, often to the extent that a native speaker requires a dictionary to understand a scholarly work.

The Standardisation of Nepali Grammar

The earliest grammars of the Nepali language were written in the 19th century, by British scholars who were resident in northern India. Although the antiquity and importance of the Sanskrit language and its literature had been revealed to the western academic world by such pioneers as Sir William Jones in the late 18th century,[54] European

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52. Ibid., p.26.
53. Perhaps the most unusual of these was Jimdo Nepālī Bhāsā by Śivarāja Ācārya (Kathmandu, 1973).
54. Garland Cannon: "Sir William Jones and British Public Opinion Towards Sanskrit Culture", Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.XXII, nos.3/4 (1980), pp.1-14.

grammarians were still influenced by the traditions of classical Greek and Latin grammar in their approach to Asian languages.[55] Thus the first grammar of Nepali, A Grammar of the Nepalese Language by J.A.Ayton, which was published in 1820,[56] was rather clumsy in its application of grammatical principles to the study of Nepali which were essentially foreign to the language. An extract from this grammar should illustrate these features:

SYNTAX

> The first and second aorist are formed immediately from its verbal syllable, and affixing the particle छु in lieu of the radix - Ex. लिखनु to write, मंलिखछु I write, or by the participle मंलिखदाछु I am writing.[57]

Prior to 1905, all Nepali grammars were written by foreigners, although Nepali-speaking pandits were often consulted. These grammars included Rev.A.Turnbull's Nepali Grammar and Vocabulary (1887), Major A.G.F.Brown's Manual of Khas Gurkhali or Parbatiya (2nd edn. 1892) and Lt.Dopping-Heppenstal's Khas Gurkhali Grammar and Vocabulary (1899). The chief reason for British interest in Nepali language was the presence of a large number of "Gurkha" soldiers in the British Indian army. As we have noted earlier, Kellog's A Grammar of the Hindi Language (1893) treated Nepali ("Naipālī") as a dialect of Hindi,[58] but it included a comparative study of Nepali grammar which drew heavily on the earlier work by Turnbull.

These grammars were bilingual and were compiled chiefly for the benefit of British officials who were required to learn the language. Thus they were not particularly useful for literate mother-tongue speakers of Nepali. By the end of the 19th century, Nepali writers were becoming aware of the need for some basic grammatical rulebook

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55. Churamani Bandhu: "Vākya-Vyākaraṇakā Vartamān Pravṛtti ra Nepālī Vyākaraṇ", in Cūḍānāth Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.) Nepālī Bhāṣā Adhigoṣṭhī 2033, Kathmandu, 1976, p.102.
56. J.A.Ayton: A Grammar of the Nepalese Language, Calcutta, 1820.
57. Quoted by Gumānsingh Cāmling in Maulo, Darjeeling, 1978, p.62.
58. S.H.Kellogg: A Grammar of the Hindi Language, London (3rd edn.), 1938, pp.69-70.

which would govern the way in which their language was written and spoken. This new awareness often came as a result of the publication of the first Nepali periodicals in Banaras and Darjeeling and between 1900 and 1910 several uncoordinated attempts were made to prescribe a written norm.

The first writing in Nepali to be entirely concerned with grammar was probably a poem entitled Besarī by Virendrakesarī Arjyāl which was published in Sundarī in 1906.[59] Besarī illustrated the poet's ideas on the correct way to compose poetry and it also incorporated a certain amount of simple linguistic theory. Two years later, a poem by Rām Maṇi Ācārya Dīkṣit, entitled Kavitā-Rīti, was published in Mādhavī; this also expounded the author's opinions concerning the composition of Nepali poetry.[60] Nepali writers of the time were primarily occupied with verse; few attempts were made during the first decade of the century to establish an acceptable style of prose. The Darjeeling scholar Gumānsingh Cāmling believes that it was impossible for Nepali writers to write essays until grammatical norms had been strengthened.[61] Rules for Nepali grammar were established with some force between 1900 and 1910, however, in works such as Vyavahāramālā and Śikṣādarpaṇa,[62] and the first Nepali essayists and prose-writers began to appear. Yet there was still a need for a systematic codification of these unstated rules which would govern all the literary genres contemporary with it.

The first such rulebook to be published resulted from the establishment in Bombay of the Gorkhāgranth Pracārak Maṇḍalī, the "Council for the Propagation of Gorkhā (Nepali) Books" in 1910, under the supervision of one Hariharācārya Dīkṣit.[63] This rulebook, which could not be said to have amounted to a comprehensive grammatical analysis, bore the rather cumbersome sub-title of Mātṛbhāṣā ra Vidyāko Durdaśā Dekhī Inko Unnatī Garanū Kartavya Samjhī, "Mindful of the Duty

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59. Bandhu, in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.103.
60. Ibid., p.103.
61. Cāmling, op.cit., 1978, p.62.
62. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, pp.79-80. Both these works were intended to instruct their readers in the art of Nepali writing, and are attributed to Jayapṛthvibahādur Singh.
63. Cāmling, op.cit., 1978, p.62.

to Further the Progress of the Mothertongue and of Learning, In View of their Poor Condition."[64]

The first true Nepali grammar by a native scholar is generally held to have been the Prākṛt Vyākaraṇ which is attributed to the pandit Jayapṛthvī Bahādur Singh and was published in 1911/12.[65] There is some confusion over the authorship of this grammar: Cāmling states that many scholars believe that it was based on another work of the same name which was compiled by Virendrakesarī Arjyāl between 1888 and 1905,[66] and Dayārām Sambhava claims that the king set Arjyāl to work on this grammar in 1903.[67] Sambhava also states that a manuscript of the same work is held by the library of the Valmīki Campus of Tribhuvan University.[68] Whatever its origins, this grammar was undoubtedly the first published work to merit the name, although it was rapidly superceded by other, more comprehensive works.

Opinions on the direction grammatical standardisation should take very soon became divided, forming two or three separate camps, each of which was centred on the editor of a particular Nepali periodical. The problem of the virām or halant which was outlined above became the most controversial issue, although it was really a question of spelling rather than one of grammar. Rām Maṇi Ācārya Dīkṣit, editor of Mādhavī (1908-09) and later head of the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti, rejected the use of the halant altogether, Sundarī, edited from 1906-07 by Cakrapāṇi Cālise, retained it and Paras Mani Pradhan, later the editor of the influential Candrikā, (1917-18), and a prominent Nepali grammarian, observed:

> "It seems best to refer to Sanskrit....the halant must be used, because the meaning of a word is unclear without it."[69]

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64. Ibid., p.62. Cāmling infers that this was actually the title of the book, which seems rather unlikely.
65. Dayārām Sambhava in: Dayārām Sambhava and Mohanarāja Śarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Saṅkṣipta Itihās, Kathmandu, 1977, p.147.
66. Cāmling, op.cit., 1978, p.63.
67. Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, p.147.
68. Ibid., p.147.
69. Quoted in: Indrabahādur Rāī: "Pārasamaṇijyū: Sandarbha Dārjīliṇmā Nepālī Bhāṣāko Mānakīkaraṇa", Bhāratīya Nepālī Vāṇmaya, Vol.1, no.1 (Darjeeling, 1980), p.74.

The second Nepali grammar to be published was Gorkhā Vyākaraṇabodh, by Viśvamaṇi Dīkṣitācārya, which appeared in 1913. The author concurred with Rām Maṇi, and so halant-bahiṣkār became the dominant theme of his work.[70]

The third grammar was Gorkhā Bhāṣā Vyākaraṇ "Candrikā" which was published in 1915.[71] Its author was the rājaguru, Hemarāja Pāṇḍe, and the grammatical rules it espoused therefore received royal approval. Once adopted by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti as the standard grammar, Candrikā silenced much of the debate and controversy surrounding the issue of the halant. Hemarāja had remained equivocal on this question, as the halant was neither wholly adopted nor wholly rejected by his grammar.[72]

As the officially-approved grammar of the Nepali language, Candrikā was made the basis for several subsequent revisions. Somanāth Śarmā's concise edition, Madhyacandrikā, reduced the original work from nearly 800 pages to 220 pages and was published in 1920.[73] This was condensed even further in Śarmā's Laghu Candrikā, a book of 80 pages which was published in 1934.[74] Paras Mani Pradhan compiled his Nepālī Vyākaraṇ with reference to Candrikā and this grammar was also published in 1920.[75] Both Śarmā's Madhyacandrikā and Pradhan's Nepālī Vyākaraṇ were taught in schools, the latter having been approved by the Director of Public Instruction for the Darjeeling District.[76] Although they were the two leading Nepali grammarians of their time, Śarmā and Pradhan were at variance over several points of Nepali grammar, particularly those concerning the classification of tenses. Their grammars were directly influenced by both Sanskrit and English conventions, as were the Hindi grammars of the time.[77]

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70. Bandhu, in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.103.
71 The Candrikā grammar comprised three volumes, published 1912-1915.
72. Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, p.150.
73. Ibid., p.150.
74. Ibid., p.152.
75. Paras Mani Pradhan: "Nepālī Vyākaraṇako Choṭo Itihās", in Sundās (ed.): Akādamī Nibandhāvalī, Darjeeling, 1976, p.12.
76. Ibid., p.12.
77. Cāmling, op.cit., 1978, pp.68-69.

The standard against which the language of school examinations has been judged since 1942 is a booklet published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti, entitled Nepālī Kasarī Śuddha Lekhne? As was noted above, the rules endorsed by this booklet are mostly concerned with spellings, but it did contain a few minor changes from the grammar of Candrikā.[78]

From 1935 to 1950, these basic grammatical rules became gradually more widely accepted as Nepali literature developed and adopted some of the aspects of its 'modern' period. A variety of supplementary publications continued to appear; these were often attempts to make grammatical rules more comprehensible,[79] but some of them addressed more specific problems, such as sentence structure,[80] spelling[81] or general style. Unfortunately, the Nepali language still lacked an authoritative agency which could standardise spellings, or solve other outstanding problems. Many grammars, too, were merely revised editions of earlier works.

After 1950, however, more concerted efforts were made to expand the scope of the language, and to unearth old texts in order to study its history. Linguistics became more established as an academic discipline in the late 1960s and a number of scholars produced strictly technical descriptive analyses of the national language as a result.[82] Academic institutions began to seek a consensus on issues of grammatical standardisation in the 1970s. The Nepāl Rajakīya Prajñā Pratiṣṭhān convened a Nepālī-Bhāṣā-Vyākaraṇ-Samiti (Nepali Language Grammar Committee) in 1970, and distributed questionnaires to established academic and literary figures, seeking their opinions on grammatical problems. This resulted in the publication of a Bṛhad Nepālī Vyākaraṇ in 1976.[83] Similarly, Sājhā Prakāśan, the largest Nepalese publisher, set up a Grammar Committee in 1972.[84]

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78. Bandhu, in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.104.
79. E.g. Puṣkar Shamsher: Sajilo Nepālī Vyākaraṇ, Kathmandu, 1944.
80. E.g. Gopāl Pāṇḍe: Racanā-Darpaṇa, Kathmandu, 1937.
81. E.g. Gopāl Pāṇḍe: Hrasva-Dīrghako Savāī, Kathmandu, 1937.
82. E.g. Gopālanidhi Tivārī: Nepālī Bhāṣāko Banoṭa, Kathmandu, 1973.
83. Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, pp.148-149.
84. Ibid., p.149.

Probably the foremost grammar of the Nepali language to have been written by a foreign scholar is T.W.Clark's Introduction to Nepali, first published in 1963.[85] Clark's system of grammatical codification refers back to the earlier grammars and seems unnecessarily complex, but it is undoubtedly comprehensive. Some of the spellings endorsed by Clark are also somewhat eccentric, influenced as they are by Turner's Dictionary. Yet Introduction to Nepali remains the most helpful grammatical summary for the foreign student.

It is undeniable that written Nepali is now almost entirely standard in its grammatical structure throughout Nepal and India. The problems presently facing the process of standardisation are nearly all related to spelling and vocabulary.

Dictionaries

Although the primary function of any dictionary is to list the vocabulary of a given language, it is also a guide to the spelling, pronunciation and syllabification of these words. In the case of a language which does not yet possess a fully standardised spelling system, a dictionary takes on a prescriptive rôle in addition to its essential descriptive nature. When a number of variant spellings exist for a single word, the compiler of a dictionary may either include each alternative spelling, or attempt to devise a system of selection by which a particular spelling is to be preferred for any given word. Thus in the Nepali context, the compilation of a dictionary is the most obvious way for a lexicographer to reform and standardise variant spellings, which represent the most outstanding problem of the modern language, and to present new vocabulary, which is rapidly being adopted by the Nepali language. Although a number of Nepali dictionaries do exist, it is unfortunate that few of them have furthered the cause of standardisation to any appreciable extent. Due also to the introduction of a large quantity of new vocabulary into the language over the last

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85. A revised edition of the Introduction to Nepali was published by the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, in 1977.

twenty years, most of them now appear incomplete in their documentation of the modern written language.

The earliest Nepali grammars and vocabulary lists were compiled by scholars from British India. Brian Hodgson's lengthy vocabulary lists[86] were later utilised by other scholars and were included in Daniel Wright's History of Nepal.[87] Access to Nepal was severely restricted for foreigners for much of the 19th century, so Hodgson's studies were long regarded as the most authoritative on the subject. Other scholars were obliged to study the language as it was spoken by Nepalese resident in India. Turnbull's grammar[88] contains another long list of vocabulary, but was compiled for the purposes of Bible translation and reflects the dialects prevalent in the Darjeeling district. Officers of the Gurkha regiments of the British Army also turned their hand to lexicography; Rogers' Colloquial Nepali[89] and Meerendonk's Basic Gurkhali Dictionary[90] both used different systems of romanised transliteration. These studies made no contribution to the standardisation of the language, as they were compiled for the benefit of the student of Nepali, not for the native speaker. The first dictionaries to be compiled by native scholars date back less than fifty years.

The majority of Nepali dictionaries are bi-lingual or multi-lingual. These are usually based on Hindi-English or English-Hindi dictionaries, and a few are actually direct translations from such sources.[91] Examples are the Regmī Nepālī-Hindī Śabdakośa, Ekadeva Upadhyaya's Nepali Dictionary (1954) and Paras Mani and Nagendra Mani Pradhan's Student's Pocket Dictionary, English-Nepali (1951).[92] Most of these

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86. Several of these lists were published in Hodgson's Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, London, 1874.
87. Daniel Wright (ed.): History of Nepal, Cambridge, 1877.
88. Turnbull, op.cit., 1887.
89. G.Rogers: Colloquial Nepali, Calcutta, 1950.
90. M.Meerendonk: Basic Gurkhali Dictionary, Singapore, 1959.
91. Ballabh Mani Dahal: "Nepālī Bhāṣā ra Kośa" in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.133.
92. Ibid., p.133.

dictionaries give English or Hindi synonyms for Nepali words, but scholars of other languages are beginning to take an interest in Nepali; a Nepali-Russian dictionary was published in 1968[93] and a Nepali-Japanese dictionary in 1965.[94] These are useful for foreigners who are learning Nepali, or for Nepali-speakers who are studying foreign languages, but they rarely make any notable contribution to the standardisation of the Nepali language.

One exception to this rule was Ralph Lilley Turner's Nepali Dictionary,[95] a Nepali-English dictionary, first published in 1931, which still represents the most comprehensive etymological and philological documentation of the language. It is also as much a prescriptive work as a descriptive one, for its author attempted to prompt some important orthographic reforms, namely the consistent usage of the halant, and the preference shown to the hrasva vowels in nearly all cases. As Clark remarks, "his suggestions have not yet commended themselves to native lexicographers".[96] A new edition of Turner's Dictionary was published in India in 1980,[97] indicating the high regard which scholars retain for the work. Yet the Nepali language which is represented in the Dictionary reflects the Indian dialects, and is thereby deficient in a great number of Nepali colloquialisms. It is also outmoded, because the neologisms which have been introduced into the language over the last three decades are omitted.

It is hardly surprising that Nepali grammarians were unwilling to accept the radical orthographic reforms suggested by Turner. Increasing linguistic nationalism meant that the only viable solutions could come from a consensus among native scholars. It is surprising to note that this consensus has still not been achieved, and that the contribution made by Nepali lexicographers remains sadly deficient.

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93. Ravinovitch and Korolev: Nepālī-Rūsī Śabda-Kośa, Moscow, 1968.
94. Terue Nakamura: Śuruko Nepālī-Jāpānī Kośa, Nara, 1965.
95. Turner, op.cit., 1980.
96. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.257.
97. Turner, op.cit., 1980.

The first major bi-lingual dictionary to be compiled by a Nepali scholar was the Aṅgrejī-Nepālī Kośa, edited by Puṣkar Shamsher and published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in 1936.[98] This was a "meticulous word-by-word rendering into Nepali of the Concise Oxford Dictionary";[99] no entry was omitted, and the authors even added a few alternative pronounciations.[100] It was quite clearly intended for the use of students of English, and included a detailed explanation, in Nepali, of English pronounciation,[101] thus it could make no reforms in Nepali orthography.

Clearly, the most urgent need was for an authoritative monolingual dictionary which would prescribe a consistent system of spelling for all the vocabulary current in the Nepali language. The first such dictionary was the Nepālī Bagalī Kośa which was edited by Cakrapāṇi Cālise and published by the Samiti in 1944.[102] Unfortunately, copies of this dictionary are no longer available and little information concerning it can be procured. In 1951, the Samiti published another monolingual dictionary, the Saṅkṣipta Nepālī Kośa, by Rāmacandra Ḍhungānā. This amounted to 724 pages and it espoused a system of orthography which was in accord with rules worked out by Puṣkar Shamsher.[103] These rules referred back to the fundamental Candrikā grammar[104] and, although both hrasva and dīrgha vowels were retained, they were selected systematically and with a fair degree of consistency. Unfortunately, the dictionary is now of limited use for modern scholars, for it contains many archaic spellings, and omits both traditional idioms and Sanskrit neologisms.

These monolingual dictionaries were superceded by Bālacandra Śarmā's Nepālī Śabda Kośa which was published by the Rājakīya Prajñā Pratiṣṭhān

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98. Puṣkar Shamsher: Aṅgrejī-Nepālī Kośa, Kathmandu, 1936.
99. Clark, op.cit., 1969, pp.259-260.
100. Ibid., pp.259-260.
101. Ibid., p.260.
102. Dahal, in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.133.
103. Clark, op.cit., 1969, p.257.
104. Ibid., p.257.

in 1962.[105] This was certainly an improvement on its predecessors, being longer (1146 pages) and more comprehensive.[106] Much of the new vocabulary of law, administration, literature and philosophy which had gained at least a limited currency was included in the dictionary, but proverbs, popular sayings and more specialised technical terms were omitted. More important was Śarmā's disappointingly equivocal attitude towards the spelling of Nepali words; where common variants existed, they were included as separate, albeit related, entries.[107] The Śabda Kośa remains the standard Nepali dictionary, partly because the major cultural institutions[108] have yet to produce a successor. As more and more terminology is adopted by the language, it is becoming steadily more out-dated, and makes no suggestion for spelling reform. A revised edition is planned,[109] and would be most welcome.

A number of other dictionaries have been compiled and published which introduce new and specialist vocabulary. These include D.B. Śreṣṭha's A Guide to Common Terms on Various Subjects (1975) and Keśavalāl Karmācārya's Saṅkṣipta Nepālī Kośa (1963).[110] Such glossaries can be used as supplements to the Śarmā dictionary, which needs to be expanded at some date in the future.

Ballabh Mani Dahal bewails the fact that Nepali lexicographers have failed to standardise Nepali spelling as much as is required.[111] He asserts that the rôle of the dictionary should be to systematically select spellings and punctuation and to devise a consistent spelling system which is accurate in its representation of Nepali phonology and morphology.

To this end, he recommends that a standard descriptive dictionary

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105. Ibid., p.258.
106. Ibid., p.258.
107. Ibid., p.258.
108. Such as the Royal Nepal Academy (Nepal Rājakīya Prajñā Pratiṣṭhān).
109. Abhi Subedi, personal communication, 1983.
110. Dahal, in Bhaṭṭarāya (ed.), op.cit., 1976, p.134.
111. Ibid., pp.135-137.

be compiled which would supercede Śarmā's somewhat out-dated work, together with a more concise "desk dictionary" for daily reference. He suggests that there is a need for an educational dictionary for use in the teaching of Nepali spelling and pronunciation in schools, and for dictionaries which would help speakers of non-standard Nepali dialects to become familiar with the accepted norm.

It seems rather unlikely that any of these recommendations will be implemented in the near future, yet the need persists for a single monolingual Nepali dictionary which uses a consistent but generally acceptable system of spelling and which can be up-dated at regular intervals with the addition of new terminology. Once revised, Śarmā's Śabda Kośa could quite easily be expanded to fulfill this rôle.

Chapter 8

The National Language in Nepalese Education

Introduction

In 1877, a British historian, Daniel Wright, described educational facilities in Nepal with the following words;

> "The subject of schools and colleges may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none."[1]

The statement is true in so far as no formal education run with Government funds or support existed in Nepal at that time. During the 19th century, the rate of literacy was abysmally low throughout the country, and the only formal educational institutions were established later in the century, for the benefit of a small élite group in the capital.

When forms of education other than those which are imparted by modern schools and colleges are taken into account, the picture which emerges is marginally less grim. There were a few institutions which offered some education to the Nepalese. In the north, gompās imparted the basic skills of literacy to male youths, primarily to enable them to read Buddhist prayers and scriptures, most of which were written in classical Tibetan.[2] Elsewhere, a number of Sanskrit schools offered a curriculum which was confined to Sanskrit studies.[3] In general,

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1. Daniel Wright (ed.): History of Nepal, Cambridge, 1877, p.18.
2. There is no evidence to suggest that Nepali was taught in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of Nepal. The training given to most novices was intended primarily to make them competent to recite religious texts in Tibetan.
3. Hugh B. Wood, "Agents of Education and Development in Nepal", Oregon A.S.C.D. Curriculum Bulletin No.317 XXVII (June, 1973), p.15. The curriculum at Sanskrit schools was devoted solely to the study of Sanskrit until they were incorporated into the National Education System in the 1960s.

however, the small proportion of Nepalese children who received any kind of education did so in their homes. Accordingly, Brahman children were more likely to become literate than their lower-caste counterparts, as their parents passed on their own educational skills, or employed pandits and priests to do it for them.[4] In Nepalese villages, education was imparted on an ad hoc basis, and there was little or no coordination of teachers. The increasing number of Nepalese who returned to their villages after serving as "Gurkhas" in foreign armies also constituted a force for change. Many had received some basic education, and were often the only literate members of their community. Their enhanced economic status meant that they were able to challenge some age-old social conventions, and many of them tutored the village youth.[5] Early in the 20th century, a number of "vernacular schools" were also established, without Government approval, in the Tarai regions bordering on India.[6] Apart from the traditional religious institutions of Sanskrit and Tibetan learning which represented a diminishing "old order", the individual efforts of high-caste parents or returning soldiers and some rather haphazard developments in the Tarai, education remained severely under-developed in Nepal until the middle of the 20th century.

Education During the Period of Rana Rule

Formal education on a western model in 19th century Nepal remained the exclusive preserve of the Rana aristocracy until the turn of the century. In 1853, Jang Bahadur, impressed by his experience of Europe,[7] became convinced that members of his family should become familiar with the English language and western modes of thought. Thus he set up a small class in his palace at Thāpāthalī, under the tutorship of one Mr.Canning. Jang's brothers and nephews were taught English, mathematics

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4. We shall see that many of the most notable poets of pre-1950 Nepal had received their primary education from their fathers.
5. Wood, op.cit., 1973, p.13.
6. Ibid., p.16.
7. For a detailed acocunt of Jang Bahadur's visit to Europe, see: John Whelpton: Jang Bahadur in Europe, Kathmandu, 1983.

and history up to the eighth grade.[8]

Subsequently, many members of the aristocracy procured private tutors for their sons and relatives, often inviting teachers from India.[9] This phenomenon marked the beginning of western-style education in India, and resulted in the establishment of the Darbar School. Quite when this school was inaugurated is not clear, as it seems to have grown from the combination of a number of private classes, which were held in different premises at different times. One source[10] states that the Darbar school was set up in the palace of Bir Shamsher in 1894, and later moved to other premises. Another[11] asserts that the classes begun by Jang Bahadur came to be housed in the Darbar School sometime in 1889. Access to the education offered by the school was wholly restricted to the children of Ranas, although so-called "plebian offspring"[12] were admitted in 1896. These were the children of other sectors of the aristocracy, and of the priests and pandits who served them, not of the average Nepalese citizen.

Little more was done to widen access to education for the Nepalese populace until Deva Shamsher became Prime Minister in March 1901, and alarmed his contemporaries with his schemes for social reform. He decreed that at least one teacher should be allotted to any community which had more than fifty children of school age, adding that school books would be provided free of charge.[13] These policies were seen as evidence of dangerously liberal attitudes, and they brought about his downfall after less than four months in office.

Deva Shamsher was replaced by Chandra Shamsher in June 1901, and his successor hastily closed the few primary schools which had been opened.

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8. Kamal P. Malla: The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.185.
9. An increasing number of young aristocrats were also sent to India for their education; during the late 19th century, the ability to speak English became the hallmark of academic success. Wood, op.cit., 1973, p.17.
10. Satish Kumar: Rana Polity in Nepal, London, 1967, p.137.
11. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.185.
12. Ibid., p.185.
13. Krishna Raj Aryal: "Education During Rana Regime", Nepal Digest, Nepal Education Special, 1977, p.124.

Chandra Shamsher had been the first Rana to receive an English-style education in India, and the first Nepalese to pass the entrance examination for Calcutta University, in 1884.[14] He would thus seem to have realised the need for the importation of scientific learning and technological expertise. He was also quite aware of the results which mass education of the sort he had received would inevitably bring. Western ideas of democracy and reform would be introduced and the authority of the Ranas would be undermined. His decision to send a number of young aristocrats to Japan in 1902[15] for a course of technical training illustrates this attitude. Technical education was available in Japan but there was little danger of the exercise producing free-thinking ideologues. In 1912, Chandra accompanied George V of Britain on a hunting trip, and is said to have informed him that Nepal lacked educational facilities, but it also lacked disruptive revolutionaries like Tilak or Gokhale, as a result.[16] To some extent, the Ranas were answerable to the innately conservative Brahmin hierarchy, too, who viewed modern education with great suspicion. Writing in 1928, Percival Landon remarked on the Brahmans' conservatism;

> "....the first beginnings of education were looked upon with something of the mistrust with which the medieval church of Rome heard of the activity of scientists within her fold."[17]

Although it should be borne in mind that Landon is now widely regarded as an apologist for the Rana autocracy, his observation probably contains more than a grain of truth.

The emerging Nepalese intelligentsia became aware of the shortcomings of the Rana regime quite early in the 20th century, and the few dissidents who dared to complain were silenced with increasing severity. In 1912, Bāburām Ācārya wrote a book entitled Nepālī Śikṣā Darpaṇa, which bewailed the complete absence of educational facilities in Nepal,

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14. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.185.
15. Kumar, op.cit., 1967, p.138.
16. Ibid.
17. Perceval Landon: Nepal, London, 1928, vol.2, p.179.

and compared the Ranas to the Shoguns of Japan. The Government was swift to destroy every copy of the book which had been printed.[18]

There do seem to have been occasions when the Ranas were obliged to make some concessions to the changing requirements of their subjects, and of the British. One source states that the Governor General intimated to Chandra Shamsher that some arrangement should be made so that Gurkhas recruited for the Second World War were at least literate. It is also stated that the Nepalese Government printed a series of Nepali readers for that purpose.[19] If this is true, one wonders how the books were distributed, and by whom.

In 1918, Chandra Shamsher inaugurated Trichandra College, the first college of higher education in Nepal. He was clearly apprehensive of the possible effects of such a move, as he is frequently quoted as having said that the college represented the beginning of the end for Rana rule.[20] It is indeed curious that a Government which was so fearful of the consequences of mass education should have felt the need for such an institution. One can only surmise that they were motivated as much by political pragmatism as by a concern for public welfare. For some time, high-caste Nepalese had travelled to India to attend schools and colleges in cities such as Banaras, Patna and Calcutta. It is probable that the Ranas, unable to stem the flow of aspiring scholars to India and mindful of the growing Indian nationalist movement, sought to control the education which was being imparted to their subjects. If Nepalese were to be educated, it would be wise to allow them to be educated within reach of the Government. The emergence of Nepalese political groups opposed to the Ranas in India would seem to vindicate this philosophy. 1918 also saw the return of many Nepalese from the war in Europe; these men posed a potential threat to Rana authority, as they brought with them new ideas and education.

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18. Aryal, op.cit., 1977, pp.125-126.
19. Ibid., p.124.
20. Malla (op.cit., 1979, p.187) quotes Chandra Shamsher as saying, "This is the beginning of our end". Kumar (op.cit., 1967, p.138) quotes the same speaker saying that it would be "the graveyard of Rana rule".

Perhaps Trichandra College was also designed to counter their influence. Finally, the Rana youths who completed their course of education at the Darbar School needed somewhere to continue their studies, and it would have been axiomatic to the rulers that an education in Nepal was preferable to an education in India, where they could have been exposed to an ideology which was essentially anti-pathetic to Rana rule.

At first, Trichandra College was purely an Arts college, and science courses were not added to its curriculum until the 1930s, when Nepal instituted its own independent School Leaving Certificate Board.[21] Until 1950, Trichandra was the only college offering post-school education in Nepal. Thus, Kamal Malla observes that,

> "Almost everyone who is today in the higher échelons of power and influence....was educated either at Tri-Chandra College or in one of the north Indian cities like Patna, Benares, Allahabad and Calcutta",[22]

a fact which leads him to assert that,

> "In many ways, the 50-year old history of this college is the history....of the contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia."[23]

The Rana administrations did not regard education as a very high priority and its development was therefore haphazard and faltering. Political stability was the primary objective for every Prime Minister, especially as the 'C' class Ranas became restive during the 1940s.[24] Thus, most moves made by the Ranas to further the cause of mass education could be interpreted as palliative moves to the end of political stability.

The unpopularity of the Rana administration increased among the

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21. Malla, op.cit., 1979, pp.185-187.
22. Ibid., p.187.
23. Ibid., p.185.
24. The 'C' class Ranas were the lowest echelon in the Rana hierarchy, which was graded according to purity of lineage. Denied any real

(Contd. on next page.....)

steadily-growing number of educated Nepalese during the late 1930s and 1940s, and a number of educational projects were belatedly introduced by the Government. Juddha Shamsher (Prime Minister 1932-46) opened a few primary schools, and appointed a Director-General of Public Instruction. This post was always held by a Rana military commander who was advised by the principals of the Darbar School and Trichandra College.[25] Juddha also permitted interested citizens to open their own schools, with permission from the Director-General, and provisions were made for these schools to receive state subsidies. These measures met with little approval among the aristocracy, and were therefore severely limited in their scope and effectiveness.[26]

Juddha's successor, Padma Shamsher, introduced a 'Basic Educational System', aiming to increase literacy, and a 'Teaching Training Programme' to remedy the shortage of qualified instructors,[27] but he was forced into exile in India in 1948. Some of his policies were reversed by Mohan Shamsher, but a Sanskrit College was inaugurated shortly before the political changes of 1950.[28]

Thus, the new Government which came to power in 1951 inherited an educational system which consisted of 321 primary schools with 8505 students, 11 secondary schools with 1680 students, and 2 colleges of higher education with 250 students.[29] Of these, three secondary schools and one college provided an education which was devoted exclusively to the study of Sanskrit, and three secondary schools and the other college employed an English language medium, and were effectively reserved for the élite.[30] The other schools included an increasingly large number of "vernacular schools", concentrated near the Indian

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(.....contd. from previous page)
power in the country, a number of them became active in the outlawed Nepali Congress Party during the 1940's.

25. Aryal, op.cit., 1977, p.127.
26. Ibid., p.127.
27. Ibid., p.127.
28. Ibid., p.128.
29. Ministry of Education, Nepal: The National Education System. Plan for 1971-76, Kathmandu, 1971, p.3.
30. Wood, op.cit., 1973, p.17.

border, a few Gandhian "Basic" schools, and the traditional religious institutions.[31] Thus very little education was conducted in a Nepali language medium, and very few Nepali textbooks existed. Less than 1% of the total population attended any kind of school, and there were fewer than 1000 high school graduates and 300 college graduates in the whole of Nepal.[32]

Education in Modern Nepal

Many changes occurred in Nepal after the collapse of the Rana regime in 1951, and nationalism became an important factor in the determination of government policy. Feeling that the kingdom was conspicuously "backward", the government introduced programmes which were designed to promote rapid social and economic reforms and development. Some of the most pronounced changes occurred in the field of education. Under the Ranas, Nepalese schools were made independent of Indian examining boards in 1933, and Hindi and Nepali were allowed as media of instruction in addition to the English medium which the Ranas favoured.[33] Each of the several administrations which succeeded the Ranas was at pains to promote the language which was already a lingua franca in the hill regions, and was also the mother tongue of most government officials. Accordingly, Nepali was made a compulsory subject in all Nepalese schools in 1952.[34] In 1954, a National Education Planning Commission was established, and given the task of producing a framework of recommendations upon which a new education system could be based. The Commission's report was published in 1956 and the following statement of its language policy provided the guidelines for all subsequent formulations of policy, although other parts of the report were largely ignored;[35]

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31. Ibid., p.17. The "vernacular schools" usually employed the Hindi medium of instruction.
32. Ibid., p.17.
33. Ballabh Mani Dahal and Subhadra Subba: Language Policies and Indigenous Languages of Nepal, (unpublished paper), Kathmandu, 1981.
34. Ibid.
35. Frederick H. Gaige: Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, Berkeley, 1975, p.108.

"Nepali should be the medium of instruction, exclusively from the third grade on, and as much as possible in the first two grades.

No other languages should be taught, even optionally, in the primary school because: few children will have need for them, they would hinder the teaching of Nepali, parents would insist on their children taking them whether capable or not, time is needed for other more important and fundamental learning, there are not enough well-qualified teachers, and those who wish, and need, additional languages can begin them in the sixth grade."[36]

Although a few members of the Commission dissented from this view, these recommendations were supported by the majority.[37] A further list of seven observations regarding the status of Nepali, which we have already discussed in this study, was added to the report to justify its decisions.

The Language Controversy in the Tarai

Nepali was the mother-tongue of a minority of the Tarai population and so the imposition of the exclusively Nepali medium of education caused considerable resentment in the region. As we have seen, Nepali had been the lingua franca among the hill peoples for generations and so the official endorsement of its rôle in education was merely an acknowledgement of the real linguistic situation in the hills. In the Tarai, however, the majority of the population knew little or no Nepali. Many of them felt that the Government of Nepal, based as it was in Kathmandu, formulated such policies with reference to the languages and cultures of the hills, and that they were designed chiefly to benefit the hillspeople.

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36. National Education Planning Commission: Education in Nepal, Kathmandu, 1956, p.104.
37. Gaige, op.cit., 1975, p.109.

Although many schools had been built in the Tarai since 1951, most were staffed by teachers who had been recruited from the educated but unemployed youth of the cities of northern India. The few Nepali-speaking teachers were mainly employed in schools attended by the children of government officials.[38] The official promotion of Nepali as the sole medium of education caused friction between the Nepali-speaking minority and the indigenous majority, who spoke other languages. Antagonism already existed between the two communities, due to complex historical and political factors, but the language issue exacerbated the situation further. The more nationalistic members of the Nepali-speaking community formed the Nepālī Pracāriṇī Sabhā and attempted to persuade the government to enhance the status of their language further by making it the sole language of administration in the Biratnagar district.[39] They were opposed by organisations such as the Tarai Congress, whose members wanted Hindi and Nepali to be adopted as joint national languages.[40] In fact, the language issue became extremely contentious in the 1959 elections, during which each of the contending parties took up a different stance on the subject.[41]

In October 1957, a new directive was issued by the government headed by K.I.Singh which was clearly intended to hasten the adoption of the Nepali medium in schools in the Tarai.[42] Nepali was to be used in all Nepalese schools, unless they had received prior permission from the Ministry of Education to use another language. (In practice, the Ministry was not especially amenable to such requests.) In addition to this, all teachers were given two years in which to demonstrate their ability to teach in Nepali, and six months in which to provide the government with evidence of their Nepalese citizenship. Schools were also required to use only Nepali textbooks henceforth.[43]

This new directive provoked a storm of protest throughout the Tarai; "Save Hindi" committees were convened in several towns and there

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38. Ibid., p.110.
39. Ibid., p.111.
40. Ibid., pp.109-110.
41. Ibid., pp.121-124.
42. Ibid., p.111.
43. Ibid., p.111.

were a number of violent demonstrations. Singh was obliged to postpone the introduction of the Nepali medium to primary schools and in January 1958 the Ministry of Education issued a second directive which made minor concessions to Hindi and dropped the clause requiring citizenship.[44] If this latter clause had been enforced, it would probably have meant the closure of many schools, as Nepalese teachers were in short supply. Even in 1967/8 75% of teachers in the Tarai were not mother-tongue speakers of Nepali.[45] The directive which stated that schools should immediately adopt the use of Nepali textbooks was also quite impracticable; most textbooks were in English or Hindi, and published in India. The few textbooks which existed in Nepali had been published in Kathmandu, and the distribution system had not yet been properly organised.[46] To some extent, the government conceded the reality of the situation; the requirement for a Nepali medium at primary schools was dropped, and a temporary arrangement was made for middle and high schools whereby instruction could be given in whatever language was deemed feasible and suitable by the Board of Directors.[47]

The demands which the government made for the immediate adoption of the Nepali medium seem in retrospect to have been wholly unrealistic, given the dearth of educational materials in the national language which afflicted Nepal at that time. Although there can be no doubt that great progress has been made in this field in the Tarai, it is clear that the establishment of Nepali as the sole medium of education is a gradual and lengthy process in areas populated by speakers of other languages. Even if it had proved to be acceptable to the local population a new medium of education could not possibly have been imposed over such a short period of time.

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44. Ibid., p.113.
45. Ibid., p.114.
46. Ibid., p.132.
47. Ibid., p.114.

Language Policy in Education in the 1960s and 1970s

Since 1959, the Nepal Government has adhered to its policy of "Nepalisation" in education, but it has been obliged to become slightly more pragmatic in its approach to the problem. In general, language policy in education has been formulated with an eye to the ideal of attaining a Nepali medium at all levels of education throughout the kingdom. Concessions continued to be made, however, to other languages in areas where large numbers of students did not speak Nepali as their mother tongue. In 1961, King Mahendra set up a committee to suggest ways of establishing a "national system of education" and Nepali was again recommended as the medium for all grades.[48] The Education Code of 1961 and the Education Act of 1962 both endorsed this recommendation, but loopholes were left for instruction in "regional" languages.[49] These policies prevailed throughout the 1960s, with only minor variations.

By 1970, the Nepali medium had become more firmly established in schools throughout Nepal as a result of the policy which the Ministry of Education had maintained for over ten years. In 1971, a new "National Education System Plan" was drawn up, in which the rôle of education in Nepal was substantially re-assessed and the importance of the national language continued to be stressed;

> "The medium of instruction in the primary and secondary schools will be Nepali. Other arrangements can be made only with the approval of His Majesty's Government. However, while teaching languages other than Nepali, the medium of instruction may be in the language concerned.
>
> The medium of instruction in the higher educational institutions will remain as of now pending alternative arrangements by His Majesty's Government. The teaching medium and textbooks will

48. Ibid., p.124.
49. Ibid., p.124.

be in Nepali even in those areas where Nepali has yet to gain a wider currency and where boys and girls can understand Nepali only with difficulty. Teachers may, however, use regional languages for explanation purposes."[50]

The N.E.S.P. stipulated that 40% of school hours should be spent on the study of Nepali in primary schools (grades 1-3), 30% in secondary schools (grades 4-7) and 12% in General High schools (grades 8-10).[51] The study of Nepali was made compulsory from grade 1, and the study of English language was compulsory from grade 4.[52] No other language could be studied until the eighth grade; even then, the study of languages such as Tamang, Rai and so on, was barely feasible, as textbook material in languages other than English, Nepali, Hindi and, to a lesser extent, Newari and Maithili, was virtually non-existent.[53]

In its early policies, the Nepal Government seemed a little over-optimistic regarding the speed with which it was imagined that the Nepali medium could be established throughout the kingdom. The blame for much of the controversy in the Tarai in the late 1950s could to some extent be apportioned to ignorance on the part of the administration regarding the linguistic and cultural situation in those regions. By the mid-1960s, widespread opposition to the Nepali medium in the Tarai had largely died down as the region became more fully integrated into the nation, and as education policy achieved some measure of success. To assess this success, the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University commissioned three "pilot projects" between 1974 and 1977 which investigated bilingualism in various areas of the Nepal Tarai: the most interesting of these were Projects nos. 1 and 3.

For Pilot Project no.1,[54] researchers studied thirteen primary schools in the Maithili-speaking regions of Janakpur and Sagarmatha zones, where students were all monolingual speakers of Maithili. Although all

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50. Ministry of Education, Nepal, op.cit., 1971, p.29.
51. Ibid., pp.24-25.
52. Dahal and Subba, op.cit., 1981.
53. Ibid.
54. Subhadra Subba: Studies in Bilingualism in Nepal. Bilingualism in Nepal Terai. Report on Pilot Project No.1, Kirtipur, 1974.

the schools' textbooks were in Nepali, they found that teachers were still obliged to make extensive recourse to the local language for classroom explanations. In middle schools, Nepali was the exclusive language of the classroom, but was rarely spoken outside the school environs. The researchers concluded that teaching was actually hampered by the sudden transition to an all-Nepali medium, and that this had engendered antipathy towards education among many monolinguals. Adult Maithili-speakers were still discontent with their children's education; of 153 interviewees, 114 said that they would prefer their children to be taught in their mother-tongue. Near the Indian border, many parents sent their children to schools in Bengal or Bihar, where education in a Maithili medium was available.[55]

Pilot project no.3[56] discovered a similar situation in Banke and Bardia districts of Bheri zone, which are populated by speakers of Avadhi and Tharu and where Hindi fulfills most of the functions of a regional lingua franca. Students whose mother-tongue was Nepali were found to progress far more rapidly in their education than those for whom Nepali was merely a "school language".

Another study of the levels of comprehension of standard Nepali was conducted among school children in the Jumla district of Karnali zone.[57] The majority of the population speak Nepali as their mother-tongue in this district, but in a regional dialect, usually known as Sinjālī, which differs substantially from the speech of Kathmandu. The researchers found that a student's comprehension of standard Nepali increased with age (64-68% of the top class of Jumla high school were found to have understood a story related to them in the Kathmandu dialect, as compared with only 52-64% in the most junior class), and that members of the higher castes also tended to be more familiar with standard Nepali.

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55. This was also common practice in the region during the 1960s, as Gaige (op.cit., 1975, pp.134-135) has described.
56. Geeta Chand, Nirmal M. Tuladhar and Subhadra Subba: Studies in Bilingualism in Nepal. Survey of Bilingualism in Banke and Bardia of Bheri Zone, Nepal. Report on Pilot Project No.3, Kirtipur, 1977.
57. Churamani Bandhu: Karṇālī Lok Saṃskṛti Khaṇḍa 4. Bhāṣā, Kathmandu, 1971.

Levels of comprehension were much lower in rural areas, averaging only 14% in the village schools which were studied. It is clear that the acquisition of another language or dialect is a far more rapid process in urban areas which are increasingly multilingual than in villages where a single dialect or language usually predominates outside school.

The Nepali medium is still not popular with the wealthy middle classes of the cities. Schools such as St.Xavier's, St.Mary's and Budhanilakantha School in the Kathmandu Valley continue to use English medium and textbooks, and many families also send their children to Darjeeling or Delhi for English medium education, which is widely held to be more prestigious and advantageous than the Nepali medium which is used in Nepal.[58]

It is quite obvious that the status of the Nepali language will continue to be enhanced as more children attend schools, and that bilingualism will increase in areas where the population do not speak Nepali as their mother tongue. Yet education is by no means universal in Nepal. Children represent a source of free labour for parents who are often extremely poor, and parents do not benefit materially from sending them to school. Primary education is freely available to all children from the age of five, teachers' salaries and the cost of textbooks all being met by the government.[59] Secondary education is also subsidised, but the size of the subsidy decreases in the higher grades. Thus in 1980, Rs.6.75 was charged per month for a child in class 4, and Rs.17 per month for a child in class 10. The greatest increases in fees came after grade 3 (increase of Rs.6.75) and grade 7 (increase of Rs.4); consequently, large numbers of children had to terminate their education at these grades.[60] In regions where Nepali does not function

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58. The social prestige and enhanced employment prospects afforded to a Nepali who can speak and read English ensure that many Nepalese regard an English-medium education as a high priority for their children. Personal enquiries, Kathmandu 1981-82.
59. Britol University Kirtipur Project: Education in Kirtipur (unpublished paper), Bristol, 1979-80.
60. Ibid.

as a lingua franca, the first objective of primary education must be to impart a knowledge of the language, and basic literacy in it. If a child then leaves school after grade 3, this will constitute the sum of its academic training and if Nepali is not widely used in the community outside, these language skills will fall into disuse.

Tertiary Education

Since the publication of the N.E.S.P. report in 1972, the general trend in Nepalese education has been towards the adoption of Nepali as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education. To this end, the government took control of the Janaka Śikṣā Sāmagrī Kendra (Janak Educational Materials Centre) in 1961 and since 1972 it has produced a substantial number of textbooks in Nepali. The government's objective had been to "vernacularise" all Nepalese education by 1980, but although this had been achieved in most of the kingdom's schools by that date, higher education posed further problems.

Tribhuvan University was founded by the Viśvavidyālaya Ain of 2016 V.S. (1959 A.D.).[61] Previously, all Nepalese colleges had been affiliated to Patna University but the creation of Nepal's first university meant that tertiary education in Nepal could be made quite independent of the education system of India. Thus from 1959 to 1972, all colleges of higher education (Bachelor and Intermediate levels) were affiliated to Tribhuvan University, and postgraduate students were offered residential courses.[62] In 1972, forty-two colleges in Nepal were affiliated to the new university.[63] At first, Tribhuvan University was accommodated in rather unsuitable premises at Tripureśvara in Kathmandu, but it was relocated to its new campus at Kirtipur in 1966.[64] In 1972, the Tribhuvan University Act superceded the Viśvavidyālaya Ain of 1959 and outlying campuses were inaugurated in most Nepalese

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61. Harṣanāth Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī: "Nepālī Bhāṣāko Kānūnī Pṛṣṭhabhūmi", Nepālī, vol.73 (1977), p.30.
62. "Tribhuvan University. A Short History" (author anonymous), Nepal Digest. Nepal Education Special, Kathmandu, 1977, pp.95-96.
63. Ibid., p.96.
64. Malla, op.cit., pp.10-11.

towns.[65] By 1979 there were 79 such campuses in Nepal.[66]

The debate over the medium of education in tertiary education has largely centred on the relative statuses of English and Nepali. Despite the vernacularisation of primary and secondary education, university students, particularly those studying scientific subjects, cannot achieve real academic success without making extensive recourse to English sources. The following summary illustrates some of the problems which Nepalese educationalists are currently facing.

Since 1972, the following subjects have been offered at degree level: Humanities and Social Sciences, General Science, Business Administration and Commerce, Sanskrit and Education. It is hoped that Law, Agriculture, Medicine and Engineering which are at present only studied for the Diploma, will soon be offered as degree subjects; Forestry is also studied at certificate level.[67] The medium of instruction is generally Nepali up to the postgraduate level, but the language of instruction and examination is often dictated by the language of the available textbooks, which are tabulated below.

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65. Nepal Digest, op.cit., 1977, p.98.
66. Subhadra Subba: "The Medium Question in Nepalese Higher Education", Contributions to Nepalese Studies, vol.7, nos.1/2 (Dec.1979/June 1980), p.76.
67. Ibid., p.76.

TABLE 14: Language of Textbooks on Principal Subjects[68] (all figures as %)

	Certificate			Degree			Postgraduate		
	Nep.	Eng.	Other	Nep.	Eng.	Other	Nep.	Eng.	Other
Humanities	67	26	7	45	40	15	7	91	2
Sanskrit	75	25	0	56	19	25			
Commerce	59	37	4	33	62	5	15	82	3
Education	81	18	1	38	50	12			
Law	73	23	4	48	37	15			
Science	6	93	1	1	97	2	0	100	0
Engineering	13	87	0						
Medicine	50	50	0						
Agriculture	15	85	0	3	97	0			
Forestry	80	20	0						

At least half of the textbooks used by students of subjects other than Agriculture, Engineering and Science are in Nepali, but it is clear that the need for English reference books increases with the level of education, so that very few Nepali textbooks are used by postgraduate students. The rôle of Nepali in university education is thus severely limited by the international status of English as the language of science and technology.

The limited scope for Nepali which exists at present is partially explicable in terms of a shortage of textbooks. Although Tribhuvan University has been under a government directive since 1977 that it should switch to an all-Nepali medium by 1983/4,[69] resources remain limited. Between 1975 and 1979 the Pāṭhykram Vikās Kendra (Curriculum Development Centre) of the University published 43 textbooks, of which 32 were in Nepali,[70] but many more are needed before the government's

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68. Yugeśvar Prasād Varmā and Churamani Bandhu: Ucca Śikṣāko Mādhyam, Kathmandu, 1980, p.24.
69. This was announced by Jagatmohan Adhikari, Head of Education, in 1977, ibid., p.20.
70. Ibid., p.20.

objectives can be realised. Yet the usefulness of Nepali textbooks for such subjects as Science and Engineering is now questioned by some Nepalese educationalists. Many are translated from English sources, using a great deal of technical (Sanskrit) vocabulary which is generally new to students. The difficulties which are engendered by this mass of unfamiliar terminology are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate technical dictionaries or glossaries in Nepali. Institutions such as the Curriculum Development Centre, the Royal Nepal Academy, Sājhā Prakāśan and the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences are currently in the process of remedying this shortage, but the difficulties persist.[71] The only course of action open to a student who is finding the Nepali textbooks difficult to understand without the aid of a dictionary is actually to read the material in English. Yet most students who enter the university will have received their education in a predominantly Nepali medium. Although English is the second compulsory language in Nepalese schools, it is studied mainly as a school subject which has very little use in everyday life.[72] Thus the Nepalese student of Science is faced with the choice between reading textbooks in a highly technical form of what is essentially a foreign "library language", or in a form of his own language which contains a great deal of incomprehensible vocabulary.

Table 14 gives the percentages of students at Tribhuvan University who stated that they experienced difficulties in understanding Nepali textbooks.

TABLE 15: Comprehension of Nepali Textbooks[73]

	Certificate level	Degree level	Postgraduate level
Humanities	18%	45%	55%
Education	14%	59%	
Law	18%		
Science	69%		82%
Engineering	61%		
Medicine	50%		
Agriculture	75%		

71. Ibid., p.19.
72. Subba, op.cit., 1979-80, p.86.
73. Varmā and Bandhu, op.cit., 1980, p.30.

Further research demonstrated that a majority of students preferred to use English textbooks and to write their examination papers in English in scientific subjects; even at the certificate level, 74% of students questioned preferred to be given their Science question papers in English.[74] Table 15 gives the percentages of students who claimed to experience difficulties in writing their examination papers in Nepali;[75]

TABLE 16: Competence in written Nepali

	Certificate level	Degree level	Postgraduate level
Humanities	15%	40%	69%
Education	29%		
Science	64%	86%	90%
Engineering	68%		
Medicine	50%		
Agriculture	75%	100%	

And when asked if they experienced difficulty in writing in English, the following results were obtained;[76]

TABLE 17: Competence in written English

	Certificate level	Degree level	Postgraduate level
Humanities	81%	78%	94%
Education	88%	67%	
Science	37%	29%	11%
Engineering	47%		
Medicine	50%		
Agriculture	100%	33%	

If the option exists, students usually choose to write their examinations in Nepali, although English is used in Science, Medicine and some branches of Engineering. From these two tables, however, it would seem that many students, particularly those studying for postgraduate qualifications, would prefer an English medium.

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74. Ibid., p.31.
75. Ibid., p.41.
76. Ibid., p.39.

University teachers also experience difficulties; they are obliged to refer to foreign language materials when preparing lectures and in Science, Engineering and Agriculture more English is used than Nepali in classroom instruction.[77] In nearly every subject, most of the students questioned by the compilers of the 1980 survey admitted to experiencing difficulty in understanding classroom instruction in English.[78] At the postgraduate level, however, most preferred it to the Nepali medium.[79]

Although Dr.Subba believes that the "recognized medium" of English will eventually be replaced by the "inevitable medium" of Nepali,[80] the persistence of these problems in the 1970s prompted a re-assessment by Nepalese educationalists of the rôles which the two languages were expected to play in tertiary education. They split into two schools of thought: an "English lobby" who insisted that English was the only suitable medium for scientific education, and a "Nepali lobby" who favoured the complete "Nepalisation" of education at every level.[81] A member of the Ministry of Education summarised the problem;

> "We had to coin a lot of technical words in Nepali, or for that matter, in Sanskrit, to substitute for the English words, but this gave rise to a very serious problem. When they went to the university, pupils could not comprehend the technical language of science textbooks, except when worked very hard by identifying the Sanskrit technical language with the original English text and its terminology. So the Nepalisation of the technical language was almost useless, and even obstructive... So we have been thinking of going back to English as far as science and maths are concerned, and maintaining the Nepali standard in other subjects."[82]

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77. Ibid., p.43.
78. Ibid., p.49.
79. Ibid., p.51.
80. Subba, op.cit., 1979-80, p.84.
81. Abhi Subedi: personal communication, 1983.
82. Quoted by Abhi Subedi in a personal communication, 1983.

This then amounts to a quite substantial rethinking of the rôle of the national language in tertiary education and it is possible that the position of English will be strengthened as a result, with Science and Maths being taught in an English medium, even at secondary school level.[83] At present the agreement between the various schools of thought on this subject remains a tacit one, and may be reversed. Yet it would seem to have been inevitable that the Nepal Government would have to re-assess its language policy for education, as technical and scientific subjects were introduced into school and university curricula. The new attitude to Nepali in higher education was hinted at by King Birendra in an interview given to Rūparekhā magazine in 1977;

> "We should not only be practical when discussing the medium of higher education, we should also consider the welfare of the people of Nepal. If Nepali reinforces Nepalese nationhood, then the international language aids its international existence. Therefore it seems to me that we should not consider the national language and the international language to be mutually opposed, but we should use each of them where it is most efficacious."[84]

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was envisaged that Nepali as the national language would eventually fulfill every function set for it in the life of the nation. Nowadays a new linguistic philosophy seems to be emerging in Nepal, which will continue to promote Nepali as an agent of progress and national unity, but which is prepared to concede to English a status as the international language of science and technology. That Nepali has proved to be less than ideal as the medium of education at every level is due more to a shortage of financial resources at the government's disposal than to any inherent inadequacy of the language.

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83. The British Council in Kathmandu have recently been requested to assist in the development of new educational materials in English. Christopher Brown: personal communication, London, 1983.
84. Varmā and Bandhu, op.cit., 1980, p.21.

PART THREE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL LITERATURE

Chapter 9

Introduction

In contemporary histories of Nepali literature,[1] literary development is usually depicted as a process of continual change and evolution which leads to a period of supposed "modernity". Nearly every historian of Nepali literature has attempted to divide this process of evolution into discrete periods of literary history, but no one model of periodisation, (kāl-vibhājan), has gained widespread acceptance. Before describing some of the qualities of Nepali literature which are now perceived by its critics to be 'modern' it would be useful to summarise a few of these models of periodisation.

Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel[2] has divided the history of Nepali literature into three periods, namely:

1. Initial period (ārambhik kāl) A.D. 1321-1743.
2. Formative period (utthān kāl) A.D. 1743-1883.
3. Period of development (vikās kāl) A.D. 1883 onwards.

The first of these periods begins with the early Nepali inscriptions of the Jumla region and leads up to the beginning of the military campaigns of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh, the king of Gorkha who eventually unified Nepal. The second period ends with the publication of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's first poems and thus it seems that Pokharel considers Bhaṭṭa, poet and biographer, to be the founder of the modern period of Nepali literature, which he prefers to describe as the "period of development". Ratnadhvaja Jośī, another noted scholar, takes issue with Pokharel's

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1. The most comprehensive, but perhaps the most succinct general history of Nepali literature is Tānāsarmā's Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās (Kathmandu, 1970); the only such work to have been published in English is Abhi Subedi's Nepali Literature. Background and History (Kathmandu, 1978). Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel's Rāṣṭrabhāṣā (Kathmandu, 3rd edn., 1979), and Pāṅc Say Varṣa (Kathmandu, 1974) are also important works of reference in this field of study.
2. Pokharel, op.cit., 1979, pp.96-112.

scheme; he points out that no Nepali writer was consciously promoting modernity in literature during Bhaṭṭa's lifetime, and that Bhaṭṭa's own works did little to usher in a new era.[3] Pokharel's periodisation is, nevertheless, of some value, in the sense that it attaches importance to the efforts which were made in the early 20th century to standardise literary Nepali. Whether Bhaṭṭa's early rôle in this process was significant enough to justify using his name for a literary period is a matter for debate.

Tānāsarmā[4] has devised a more detailed scheme of periodisation, dividing the history of Nepali literature into five periods, namely;

1. Pre-Bhānubhakta period, up to A.D. 1814.
2. Bhānubhakta period A.D. 1814-1882.
3. Motīrām period A.D. 1883-1919.
4. Pre-revolutionary period A.D. 1920-1950.
5. Post-revolutionary period A.D. 1950 onwards.

He clearly considers Bhānubhakta and Motīrām to have been the most important Nepali writers of the 19th century, and seems to regard the political changes of 1950 as a landmark in the development of Nepali literature. Literary activity certainly increased in the atmosphere of enhanced freedom which characterised the 1950s in Nepal, but the decade was not marked by any significant change in the course of literary development. In terms of changes and modernisation, the 1960s were a more important decade for Nepali literature.

Other Nepali scholars have been more cautious in their attempts to impose a system of periods on the course of literary development. Abhi Subedi, for instance, describes a modern period which began in 1941, preceded by a "formative" period beginning after the political unification of Nepal, in 1776.[5] In general, Nepali scholars invoke the more momentous events of their history and the lives of famous writers such as Bhānubhakta as important milestones in the course of Nepali literary

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3. Ratnadhvaja Jośī: Sāhitya-Cintan, Kathmandu, 1975, p.91.
4. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.7.
5. Subedi (op.cit., 1978) does not discuss periodisation, but gives these terms as chapter-headings.

development. The date for the beginning of the "modern" period remains as controversial as the definition of modernity itself. An assessment of modernity in literature is essentially a subjective judgement which will vary greatly from person to person. Ratnadhvaja Jośī, for instance, asserts that a Nepali writer must treat themes and adopt philosophical standpoints which are "in accordance with time and place and free from the constraints of traditionalism" if he is to be considered truly modern.[6] The history of Nepali literature is usually described with reference to the development of a number of its features; their evolution is represented as a process of gradual modernisation. Some of the aspects of Nepali literature in which significant changes have occurred over the last two hundred years are summarised below.

Thematic content

A classification of Nepali literature into categories of "old" and "modern" on the basis of thematic content would rest on the assumption that traditional and religious themes were "old-fashioned". Until the early 20th century, Nepali literature continued to be dominated by works which were composed in order to convey a specific mood or sentiment (rasa); in this it differed little from 19th-century literature in Hindi or Bengali. An increasing proportion of this literature was secular rather than religious, and the original work of its author, rather than the translations from the Sanskrit classics which had prevailed in the early 19th century. Its content of quasi-erotic love poetry, invoking the rasa of śṛṅgār, and heroic narrative, invoking the rasa of vīr, did nevertheless stem from earlier literary traditions. The continuing popularity of such stereotypical poetry in the early 20th century is illustrated by the existence of a large number of editions of works such as Prema-Laharī "Ripples of Love" by R.N.Pradhān and Bhoṭako Laṛāīko Savāī, "Verses on

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6. Jośī, op.cit., 1975, p.94.

the war with Tibet" by Siddhibahādur Basnyāt. The publication of such Nepali books in the early 20th century was a new phenomenon insofar as it made vernacular literature more widely available in Nepal than it had ever been before, but the thematic content of these works was very rarely innovative. While it was constrained by the traditional conventions of rasa and kāvya which governed both content and structure, Nepali literature was unlikely to evolve forms which would now be regarded as authentically "modern".

Literary genre

Poetry has always been the most developed genre of Nepali literature; we have already noted that prose composition was hindered by the unstandardised nature of Nepali grammar until the early 20th century. Thus the earliest innovations occurred in poetry, but a number of Nepali poets also turned their hand to prose composition once grammatical norms had been established. The extent to which the willingness to dispense with former literary conventions was a precondition for changes in thematic content is something of a moot point. Many traditional poetic metres were derived from Sanskrit verse and so it would seem reasonable to assume that the employment of such metres precluded the treatment of anything other than the themes which had traditionally been associated with them. This view is perhaps borne out by the adoption by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa and his contemporaries of the conventions of the Urdu ghazal, which represented one of the earliest of such innovations. Although the themes of these ghazals were strongly reminiscent of śṛṅgār poetry, their interpretations of this rasa were influenced by the conventions of the literature from which the metre had been borrowed, almost to the point of mimicry in some instances. Although the ghazal retains some limited currency today, its popularity has always been rather restricted, but these early signs of an inclination towards borrowing on the part of late 19th-century Nepali poets were an indication of their growing awareness of other literary traditions.

More radical departures were made from traditional poetic conventions later in the century, as the desire for experimentation became more widespread and the influence of other literatures more profound. In some instances, metre was eventually abandoned altogether, and prose-poetry (gadya-kavitā) became popular during the late 1940s.

The emergence of prose literature in Nepali necessitated the adoption of literary genres which had been almost wholly foreign to Nepal until the early 20th century. Interest in European literatures had been growing in the Indian subcontinent throughout the 19th century and Nepali writers began to adopt genres such as the novel and the short story from these sources, usually by way of translations into Bengali and Hindi. In general, Nepalese conceptions of political and social modernity were formulated with reference to European ideals. Aspirations to egalitarianism and democracy were echoed by the desire for literary modernity which was fulfilled in part by the adoption of these new literary genres.

Language

It is essential for the development of a modern literature that the language in which it is written must be standardised to the extent that writers will have no difficulty in agreeing upon which spelling or grammatical construction is correct in any given instance. As we have seen, written Nepali is now substantially more consistent than it has ever been, but some problems do persist. The general acknowledgement by Nepali writers of the need for grammatical standardisation, which is in itself one aspect of literary modernity, was a development which occurred during the first three decades of the present century, when rules for written Nepali were laid down by Nepali grammarians.

The first twenty or thirty years of the 20th century saw changes in Nepali literature which were partly the results of an increasing awareness of foreign literature, and partly of an emerging cultural nationalism. Although by no means fundamental, these developments initiated a steady process of change and they are therefore often said to have heralded the

advent of modernity to Nepali literature. The appearance of a number of poets of a stature unprecedented before 1930 (Lekhnāth, Sama, Devkoṭā and others), marked another important stage of Nepali literary history. Their absence now indicates that further changes will continue to occur.

If any consensus could be said to exist among Nepali scholars regarding the dates ascribed to the "modern" period of their literature, it is that it had its origins sometime between 1930 and 1950. Yet it is clear that Nepali literature continued to change in its themes, genres and language during the 1960s and 1970s; perhaps this will inspire its historians to invent another period-title, such as "modernist" in future, or to revise their schemes of periodisation. Although many Nepali writers have striven consciously to "modernise" their literature during the 20th century, it is important to remember that all literature is "contemporary" when it is first written.[7] The division of Nepali literary history into discrete periods is, inevitably, conjectural, and often erroneous and misleading.

Although reference will be made in the following chapters of this study to the various periods of literary development which are suggested by Nepali scholars, no one scheme of periodisation will be endorsed. It should be sufficient merely to document the history of Nepali literature and to attempt to identify the underlying trends which its development reflects. It is not imperative to divide literary history into discrete periods; as we have noted, such periodisations will always vary according to the criteria upon which they are based.

The first part of the following account of Nepali literature deals with the small quantity of written Nepali extant from the period which preceded the political unification of Nepal. Historical detail which

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7. A point well made by Mulk Raj Anand in "Tradition and Modernity in Literature", Journal of South Asian Literature, Vol.X, No.1 (Fall, 1974).

is relevant to the subject in hand will be included, but the main theme of the discussion will be the emergence of a standardised literary form of Nepali, beginning with its earliest antecedents, which are found in the 14th-century inscriptions of western Nepal.

By the mid-20th century, literary Nepali had become generally standardised and between 1930 and 1960 works were produced which are now deemed to be the "modern classics" of its literature. Thus, our attention will be focussed on the emergence of a body of modern literature in the national language of Nepal. This account of literary development will examine the lives and works of some of the most important writers of Nepali literature, beginning in the early 19th century.

Chapter 10

Early Nepali: Evidence from Inscriptions

The earliest examples of what is now regarded to be a form of written Nepali date from the 13th and 14th centuries and are found in a number of inscriptions which were commissioned by royal patrons in the "far west" of modern Nepal. In the 1950s, the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci proved that a large, well-administered and fairly prosperous kingdom had existed in the Karnali Basin from the 13th to the late 14th century. A succession of monarchs, first styled "Challa" and later "Malla", ruled over an extensive domain which, at the zenith of its power under Pṛthvīmalla in the mid-14th century, incorporated dependencies in Tibet and on the plains of India.[1] The Malla kings may have been descendants of the Khas, or of the Rajput immigrants who are said to have come after them, but were probably of mixed ethnic origins. Each theory concerning the precise identity of the Mallas has its own proponents, but it is quite plain that they spoke an Indo-European language which was used both by their administration and by the administrations of the kingdoms which arose from their later political fragmentation. This language has come to be closely related with modern Nepali.

There exists a substantial amount of evidence for the existence and widespread currency of a language which bears a close resemblance to Nepali during this period, but caution should be exercised in any attempt to relate it to its modern form. It seems that Nepali scholars have selected all the inscriptions discovered in the area that were not written in either Sanskrit or Tibetan,[2] and termed them Nepali or

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1. Giuseppe Tucci: Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal, Rome, 1956.
2. The Malla kings also used Tibetan for administrative purposes, ibid., p.61.

"Sinjālī".[3] It is true that this language does share many features with the modern lingua franca, but it is not markedly dissimilar to other vernaculars such as Kumāonī or Gaṛhvālī, or in some instances to the Hindi with which it was contemporary. The name "Nepali", in view of the linguistic developments which have occurred, has been applied retrospectively by Nepali scholars to the language of 14th century inscriptions which shares many features with their national language. Although Nepali scholars are investigating the early history of their language, and are regularly discovering new inscriptions and manuscripts, this is still a comparatively new field of study in Nepal and research is hampered by a paucity of material.

Before proceeding to an examination of a few published texts of these inscriptions, it will perhaps be useful to describe the major differences which may be discerned between the language of the early inscriptions and modern Nepali.

Variant spellings

The orthography employed in these inscriptions is, of course, wholly unstandardised. Spellings vary greatly from inscription to inscription, and the same word may be spelled in a number of different ways within a single text. It is interesting to note that the confusion of ख kha and ष ṣa, व va and उ u, या yā and ए e etc. which is so common in these early inscriptions persisted in written Nepali until the mid-19th century.[4] Thus भाषा bhāṣā, 'language' is usually spelled भाखा bhākhā and राख्नु rākhnu 'to put' is spelled राष्नु rāṣnu. Similarly, there is no consistency in the choice of long and short इ i and उ u vowels; hrasva (short) and dīrgha (long) forms are usually employed indiscriminately, as they have been until quite recently in "modern" Nepali. Despite these archaic spellings, it seems reasonable to assume that no significant changes have occurred in the pronunciation of such words.

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3. A dialect of modern Nepali spoken in the Jumla region of western Nepal.
4. The ए e spelling did not begin to replace the या yā spelling until late in the 19th century. In Bhānubhakta's Rāmāyaṇa (mid-19th century) the latter spelling is consistently employed.

Variant forms

The second difference between modern Nepali and the language of these inscriptions is more fundamental. The verb 'to do', garnu in modern Nepali, is derived from the root कर् kar- in the earliest of these examples. If the modern form did evolve from this root, the early material which is currently available does not enable us to ascertain quite when it did so. In the dialect of Nepali, Sinjālī, which is still spoken in the Jumla region, the confusion between क ka and ग ga persists. This lends some weight to the argument that the language of the Jumla inscriptions is not early standard Nepali, but early Sinjālī.[5]

Gender

Certain inanimate nouns are accorded a feminine gender; examples are bhāṣā, "language" or "word", and śākhā, "branch". In modern Nepali, as we have noted, feminine gender is only accorded to nouns denoting women, but in khaṛī bolī Hindi the nouns mentioned above are also given feminine gender. In this and many other ways, the language of the Jumla inscriptions is less distinct from other Indo-European languages contemporary with it than is modern written Nepali.

Postpositions and plural endings

The modern plural suffix -harū is wholly absent from the language of these inscriptions. Where plurals are denoted, they are signified by ā endings to adjectives, nouns etc. Such forms are currently being reintroduced into poetic and "high" Nepali. The postpositions -le (agentive) and -lāī (object-marker) are also absent. The grammatical function of -lāī is performed by -kaṃ, -kana or -aṃ in these examples. The -kana postposition is sometimes used in modern poetic Nepali.

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5. The historical relationship between Nepali and the Sinjālī dialect is described by Churamani Bandhu in: Karṇālī Lok Saṃskṛti Khaṇḍa 4 Bhāṣā, Kathmandu, 1971, pp.1-11.

Vocabulary

It is not surprising to find a number of obscure words in these early inscriptions. Some words which retain their currency in the modern language also seem to have conveyed slightly different meanings in the 14th century. bhāṣā (bhākhā) can always be translated as 'language' in modern Nepali, but it appears from its context in these inscriptions to have the meaning of "promise" or "bond"; "the word of the king". The word pasā occurs very frequently and probably corresponds with modern prasād, being translated in the phrase pasā kari as "graciously bestowing", the sense being one of a gift freely given by a superior to his subordinates. The word ālo (plural ālā) means "irrigated field" and is not found in modern Nepali.[6]

Most specimens of written Nepali which survive from before the 16th century are from royal edicts (lāl mohar), inscriptions on stone (śilālekh), copper-plate (tāmrapatra) or gilded copper (kanakapatra). These do not provide us with a large or comprehensive sample of the language of the period and so any conclusions which might be drawn from them are necessarily tentative. Table 16 lists the inscriptions dating from before 1600 which are now available in a published form.[7]

TABLE 18: Early Nepali Inscriptions

Attributed to:	Title	Date (A.D.)
Aśoka Challa	Tāmrapatra	1245[8]
Ādityamalla	Tāmrapatra	1321[9]
Puṇyamalla	Tāmrapatra	1328, 1336, 1337
Pṛthvīmalla	Kanakapatra	1356
Pṛthvīmalla	Tāmrapatra	1358
Abhayamalla	Tāmrapatra	1376
Medinī Varmā Raulā	Tamrapatra	1393
Saṃsār Varmā Raulā	Tāmrapatra	1396
Kalyāl Nareśa Balirāja	Tāmragrantha	1398
Medinī Varmā & Balirāja	Tāmrapatra	1404

6. Dayanand Srivastava: "A Note on the Language of Prthvi Malla's Kanaka-Patra and of Pratap Malla's Rani Pokhari Inscription from Nepal", Bulletin of the Philological Society, Vol.II (1961), pp.116-123.
7. Most of these have been published in two collections; Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel's Pāṅc Say Varṣa (Kathmandu, 1974) and Ishwar Baral's Sayapatrī (Biratnagar, 1969).
8. This inscription was discovered by Mohan Prasād Khanāl in 1977

(Contd. on next page.....)

Attributed to:	Title	Date (A.D.)
Udaya Varmā & Ajita Varmā	Tāmrapatra	1437
(Bamma Varmā?)	Tāmrapatra	1496
Kārvarika Vivoṣa Śāhī	Tāmrapatra	1498
Bhānaśāhī	Lāl Mohar	1529
Surtiśāhī	Tāmrapatra	1581
Gaṇeśa Jaisī, Yaśu Jaisī & Phugu Jaisī	Tāmrapatra	1590
Arjanya Buḍā	Lāl Mohar	1591

If authenticated, the tāmrapatra of Aśoka Challa will prove to be the oldest example of written Nepali extant, but the text of this inscription has not yet been published in full and so we are obliged to begin this account with the tāmrapatra of 1336 which is attributed to king Puṇyamalla of the kingdom of Jumla. This inscription begins with the date and an invocation and ends with a list of witnesses; other than these, its text is as follows:

> ....piutharpu rāja kari akryā bhākhā pasā bhai. rāiko ādes. hum dāṅgkā pekhaka aḍai adhikāri mahar mahantauṃ sabhauprati sunā ra tāmā śāsan kanaka patra ki bhāṣ kari jayākara paṇḍitaṃ catu. sīmāparyanta viśuddha ācandrārkasthāyī sarvavādhāvinirmukta kari pasā kari akryā chuṃ. puṇyamalla ki śākhā yo bhāṣā pratipāla. jayākara paṇḍitanko pūt nāti bhāi bhatijā celikā celā ādi bhuncan. vasyo rasyo dekhi kohi ulaṭā palaṭiṃ karna napāṃvan. āpanaṃ ucitai kari jayākara paṇḍitai dhuṃyan.[10]

"In Piutharpu[11] this bond of (tax) exemption was graciously granted. The command of the king. To the pekhaka Brahmans, the aḍai and adhikāri Brahmans and Chetris, the mahar and mahato Chetris and all the castes of Hum and Dāng; there being no fault within the four frontiers (of the

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(.....contd. from previous page)
and a short extract from it was published in the Gorkhāpatra newspaper in the same year.

9. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel gives a short extract from this inscription in Rāṣṭrabhāṣā (Kathmandu, 3rd edn., 1969), p.19, and terms its language "Sinjālī".

10. Pokharel, op.cit., 1974, p.3.

11. Piutharpu was probably a subsidiary capital of the Malla kingdom at this time, ibid., p.4.

kingdom) and I being free of all hindrance (to my action), I have exempted the Pandit Jayākara from taxes. This is a bond written on gold and copper which will last as long as sun and moon endure. May the members of Puṇyamalla's line uphold this promise. May the son(s), grandson(s), brother(s), nephew(s) and the sons of the daughter(s) of the Pandit Jayākara and all his clan fully enjoy (this privilege). May all respect their residence and may no-one interfere with them. May Jayākara himself make use (of this privilege) as he sees fit."

The grammar of this inscription is obscure in places and so its translation must remain open to revision. The construction which employs the word akryā occurs frequently in these inscriptions and is clearly concerned with tax exemption. Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel, who has made a great contribution to this field of Nepali studies, relates akryā to modern akara, "tax exemption",[12] but it is possible that the same word becomes merely a verb participle in later inscriptions, when it is linked with the kari and gari participles of the verb "to do". Thus this royal ordinance might simply confer a right to residence within the kingdom. The verbs bhuncan and dhuṃyan are not found elsewhere, but their meanings seem from the contexts in which they appear to be similar to the modern verb bhognu, "to use" or "to enjoy".

An extract from the kanakapatra of Pṛthvīmalla (1356), the son and successor to Puṇyamalla, will illustrate the similarity of its language to that of the inscription above;

....es kanakapatra bhitaraki bhāṣā golhu joisiṅkā pūta nāti bhāi bhatijo celiko celo ādi pāva. jo yo kanakapatra bhitaraki bhāṣā ghāla ghalāva ṣosa ṣosāva so āpnā dyopitara ekai sai puruṣā kumbhinaraka ghāla. brahmā viṣṇu iśvara buddha dharma saṅgha etikaṃ devaṃ ghāle. jo eti ṣaukiyā namāni es kanakapatra bhitaraki bhāṣā ghāla ghalāva ekai

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12. Ibid., p.4.

upadrava kara tāsko buvā gādaha tāskī āmā sugri. jo yo bhāṣā pratipāla so puṇya pāiya.[13]

"May the sons, grandsons, brothers, nephew(s) and the son of the daughter etc. of Golhu Jaisī receive the boon of this kanakapatra. Whosoever destroys or snatches away the promise made in this kanakapatra, his forefathers and one hundred of his ancestors will be destroyed in Hell. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Iśvara, the Buddha, the Law, the Monastic Community: he will destroy all of these He who pays no heed to such a warning, and breaks the promise made in this kanakapatra or performs even one such misdeed, will have an ass for his father and a sow for his mother. He who upholds this bond will receive merit....."

Although the language of this kanakapatra is, quite fortuitously, more readily comprehensible than that of the tāmrapatra of 1336, there are no major differences in its grammar or orthography. Note the creation of the causative verbs ghalāva and ṣosāva from ghāla and ṣosa, which are clearly related to modern Nepali ghālnu/ghalāunu "to destroy" and khosnu/khosāunu "to snatch."

The power of the Malla kingdom, from which these inscriptions have come, declined after the reign of Pṛthvīmalla (mid-14th century). Western Nepal became politically fragmented; before the Gorkhali conquests of the 18th century, there existed some 46 petty kingdoms in the western half of the country. The reconstruction of Nepali linguistic history on the basis of the specimens of Nepali which survive from this late medieval period is hampered by the question of provenance. It is clear that this language was used by most of these administrations, if not by all of them, and that it was already functioning as a lingua franca as far east as the Kathmandu Valley in the 17th century. It is

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13. Ibid., p.8.

likely that there would have been some dialectal variations in the language from area to area, however, and so a treatment of the whole body of epigraphic material as a coherent reflection of the development of the language without relating the available specimens to the locale of origin is likely to lead to some serious misconceptions. In the absence of data concerning the provenance of some inscriptions, one is severely restricted in the statements one can make regarding the course of linguistic development. Despite this, a number of early examples have all been found in the region of Sinjā, the summer capital of the Jumla kingdom, and several interesting developments are discernible in them.

The tāmrapatra of 1376, which was commissioned by Abhayamalla, the son of and successor to Pṛthvīmalla, is similar in style and content to those which predated it, but it is noteworthy for one particular sentence:

> ....jo bhāṣā pṛthvīmalla rāikā pasā ki thi tai bhāṣā ma pasā ki akryāṃ chuṃ.[14]
>
> "I also grant the same boon that was granted by King Pṛthvīmalla."

The agentive postposition -le is still absent, but the feminine gender accorded to bhāṣā carries over to a concord in the verb. This grammatical convention is wholly foreign to modern Nepali, but occurs in the grammar of khaṛī bolī Hindi.

Another verb form which would be considered anachronistic in modern Nepali appears in the tāmrapatra of Medinī Varmā Raulā (1393).[15] The first person perfective kiyāṃ, "I did" is more similar to modern Hindi kiyā than to modern Nepali gareṃ. It occurs in the same context as did akryā in the earlier tāmrapatras and thus a comparison between these variant forms is probably valid;

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14. Ibid., p.15.
15. Ibid., pp.17-18.

pasā kari akryā chuṃ (1336)
pasā ki akryāṃ chuṃ (1376)
pasā kiyāṃ chuṃ (1393)

As these were all commissioned by kings of Sinjā, regional variation can be ruled out and the point which was made earlier concerning the meaning of akryā may again be raised. Each of these phrases may be translated as "I bestow" or "I have bestowed"; the third may be merely a condensed version of the others. Similar forms recur in the tāmrapatra of 1404 (pasā kiyāṃ chauṃ and kara akara ki pasā kiyāṃ chauṃ), in which the case is altered from first person singular chuṃ to a plural form chauṃ.[16] (Cf. modern Nepali chu and chauṃ.) The existence of such a variety of similar phrases with exactly the same semantic value points to the essentially unstandardised nature of the language, and perhaps to the existence of early dialects. As has been stressed, caution must be exercised in relating the language of these early inscriptions to the modern national language; it exhibits a number of features which are absent from the latter. Yet it is true that many of the features of modern Nepali grammar which are absent from the early Jumla inscriptions do appear in later examples. Again, this can sometimes be attributed to the fact that some central dialects would have been more similar to modern Nepali than those of the west, where the Sinjālī dialect still prevails.

In the tāmrapatra of 1498 we find the first example of the ho form of the verb "to be";

sijāko rājā kṣoni dalkā ho[17]

"The king of Sinja belongs to the Kṣoni clan."

and the verb garnu, as opposed to the old kar- root, appears in the same inscription. The first usage of the agentive postposition le is found in the Lāl Mohar of 1529;

aṃnyā aṃnya svavaṃśa pravaṃśa kasaile dharma naghāla.[18]

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16. Ibid., pp.23-24.
17. Ibid., pp.30-31.
18. Ibid., p.33.

"May no-one of this or any other lineage destroy the Law."

By the late 16th century, too, the perfect participle had developed a form which it retained for some 300 years;

Form	Date	"Modern" equivalent
joḍyāko cha	1581	joḍeko cha
garyāko cha	1581	gareko cha
diyāko cha	1590	dieko cha
gayākā chan	1590	gaekā chan

Such forms are merely variant spellings which would have been pronounced exactly the same as their modern equivalents.

Nepali scholars have been somewhat uncritical in their treatment of these inscriptions, tending to emphasise the similarity of their language to modern Nepali, and thereby enhancing the prestige of the national language by documenting the antiquity of its heritage. Although there can be no doubt of the existence of a definite relationship between the language of the early inscriptions and the modern lingua franca, the precise nature of that relationship has not yet been defined.

Chapter 11

Political Unification: The Beginning of Nepali Literature

The evolution of the kingdom of Gorkha from merely one of many minor hill states in central Nepal to a major military power which was eventually responsible for the political unification of the region is probably the most crucial process of Nepalese history. Like the Sens of Makwanpur, the Shāh lineage of Gorkha claims to be descended from Rajputs who fled to the Himalayas from Chittaurgarh after it was sacked by Muslim invaders in the 14th century.[1] The main source for the early history of the Shāhs is the Bhāṣāvaṃśāvalī, a royal chronicle which is informative with regard to genealogy and the chronology of successions to the throne, but which also tends to aggrandise the members of the lineage.[2] Secondary sources are not plentiful[3] and so attempts to reconstruct the early history of Gorkha prior to the reign of Dravya Shāh (1559-1570) are necessarily conjectural.

What is certain is that the Nepal of the early 16th century was politically fragmented to such an extent that unification was barely conceivable, nor is there any evidence which suggests that such an idea was ever mooted by the rulers of any Nepalese kingdom prior to the 18th century. Fr.Stiller, the American Jesuit who has become a leading authority on Nepalese history, describes the underlying political trends of the period which continued to favour further fragmentation;

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1. Hodgson observed that the rulers of Nepal played down their Khas origins and emphasised their relationship with the more prestigious lineages of the Rajputs. B.H.Hodgson: "Ethnography and Geography of the Sub-Himalayas", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol.18, no.1 (June, 1848), p.546.
2. Bālacandra Śarmā: Nepālko Aitihāsik Rūparekhā, Banaras (5th edn.), 1980, p.209.
3. Historians have made great use of these vaṃśāvalīs in their studies of Nepalese history. Daniel Wright, for instance, based his History of Nepal (Cambridge, 1877), on a translation of the Gorkhā Vaṃśāvalī.

"To the east of Kathmandu Valley there were two kingdoms in the Tarai, Bijayapur and Chaudandi, and the independent state of Sikkim in the eastern hills. To the south of the Valley lay Makwanpur. In Kathmandu Valley itself there were three independent kingdoms. Immediately to the west of the Valley, in central Nepal, were the Chaubisi Rajas - the twenty-four princes. Still further west were the Baisi Rajas - the twenty-two princes. Mustang lay to the north. Kumaon and Garhwal lay across the Kali River outside of modern Nepal."[4]

These states were of varying sizes, but most covered less than 850 square miles[5] and many of them became smaller during the early 16th century as the forces favouring political fragmentation progressed.[6] Shāh kings reigned in several kingdoms, notably those of Lamjung and Nuvākoṭ, and Dravya Shāh seized the throne of Gorkha in 1559.[7] This development marked the beginning of a gradual reversal of the process of fragmentation, as each subsequent Gorkhali king extended the kingdom through conquests and political alliances. The details of this extremely complicated period of history need not detain us here; Fr. Stiller's study is probably the best account to have been written in English.

The Nepali language had been the lingua franca of the western hills for several centuries before the kingdom of Gorkha attained political supremacy in central Nepal. As we have already noted, it was generally known as khas-kurā, "the language of the Khas". The fact that the same language came to acquire the names Khas-Gorkhālī or Gorkhālī

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4. Ludwig Stiller: The Rise of the House of Gorkha, Patna (2nd edn.), 1975, p.34.
5. Ibid., p.34.
6. Stiller explains that the division of the kingdom was the natural course of action for a king who wished to favour each of his successors. He gives the example of Mukundu Sen of Makwanpur, who parcelled out his dominions among four sons, a grandson and a nephew in 1553. (Ibid., p.39) Political fragmentation was also caused by migrations and disputed successions. (Ibid., pp.41-48).
7. Śarmā, op.cit., pp.210-211.

during this period indicates that a direct relationship existed between its enhanced status as the mother-tongue of the Gorkhali rulers and the language of their state administration, and its efficacy as a lingua franca. This Gorkhālī might have been used in the eastern and central Himalaya as much for its acknowledged prestige in the 16th and 17th centuries as for the greater facility of communication which it afforded. A number of early Nepali texts emanated from Gorkha before the conquest of the Valley kingdoms, and the most well-known of these was the "biography" of Rām Shāh.

Rām Shāhko Jīvanī

Rām Shāh reigned over Gorkha from 1606 to 1633, succeeding his elder brother, Chatra Shāh, who had died without leaving an heir to the throne.[8] The jīvanī ("biography") of Rām Shāh is sometimes said to have been written shortly after his death, but the published text was taken from a manuscript which dates from the time of Bhīmsen Thāpā, mukhtiyār ("minister") from 1806 to 1837.[9] Tānāsarmā suggests that, given the detail in which certain episodes are recounted, the manuscript in question is obviously from a later date than its subject.[10] The apparent "modernity" of the language of this text is readily explicable in these terms. The published version was probably based on a later recension of an older text, the language of which was "modernised" in transmission. Even in its original form, Rām Shāhko Jīvanī is not the earliest example of non-inscriptional Nepali extant,[11] but it was first written in Nepali and could therefore be said to be "original" (maulik), whereas much of the "literature" of the same period was translated from Sanskrit. The following passage describes the enthronement of Rām Shāh;

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8. Ibid., pp.211-213.
9. The text of the jīvanī is published in Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel: Pānc Say Varṣa, Kathmandu, 1974, pp.67-71.
10. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.17.
11. This is a distinction which might now be claimed by an account of a journey through central Nepal in A.D. 1493, attributed to a minor Malla king called Gaganirāja. Pūrṇaprakāśa Nepāl "Yātrī": Rājā Gaganirājako Yātrā, Kathmandu, 1982.

....tasai velāmā sallyānīharūle pani gorṣāmā śrī 5 mahārāja chatrasāha svargārohaṇa hunu bhayāko samācāra sunyā chan ra gorṣāliharū naāudai hāṃmi āphai śri sāhebajyū rāmasāhalāī calāuṃ bhani śubha sāyatamā calāyā. vāhāṃdeṣī gorṣākā bharabhārādāra sakala pancale thāhā pāyā ra parasamma pugyāra vaḍā harṣale sāmela bhai darśana gari gorṣāmā calāyā ra vaḍā jānnyā jyotiṣiharū volāī guruprohitaharū vasi ṭhaharāyākā śubha sāyatamā aneka gīta vādya maṅgala śakunādile dīpakalaśagaṇeśapujāvidhānādi bhayāpachi, śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī mahārāja rāmaśāha siṃhāsanamā rāja garnu bhayo.[12]

"....at that time the people of Sallyān heard that Shrī Pānch[13] Mahārāja Chatra Shāh [had died and] ascended to heaven. They thought that they would bring Shrī Saheb Rām Shāh along with them until the people of Gorkha came, and they brought him at an auspicious time. Thence the nobles and all the ministers of the council of Gorkha discovered the news and they arrived, gathering together with great joy to behold him. They took him to Gorkha and summoned many great and wise astrologers. The teachers and priests were seated and at the auspicious moment that had been appointed, after many songs, much music, auspicious portents, the worship of Gaṇeśa with lamps, water vessels and so on, (Rām Shāh) graced the throne with his presence."

The apparent antiquity of the Nepali of this biography can be attributed merely to the archaic spellings of gorṣā (Gorkhā), deṣi (dekhi: from, since), and the yā spelling in verbs where e would now be written, for example bhayāko (bhaeko), sunyā (sune), calāyā (calāe), etc. The Jīvanī probably post-dates Rām Shāh himself by at least a century; Tānāsarmā[14] notes that its language is very similar to that of the

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12. Pokharel, op.cit., 1974, p.67.
13. Śrī Pānc: "five times blessed"; an epithet of the Shāh kings of Nepal.
14. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.17.

biography of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh,[15] suggesting that the two works might have had roughly contemporary authors. All in all, this Jīvanī is an enigmatic account and, if it does indeed date from the early 17th century, this cannot be the original text, but a modern adaptation with 19th century affectations.

The Rānī Pokharī Inscription

By the middle of the 17th century, Nepali had already become an important language in and around the Kathmandu Valley. It does seem that the spread of the lingua franca of the west towards the Nepalese "heartland" was not a direct result of the Gorkhalī expansion. Gorkhali was not exclusively the language of Gorkha, and there are several examples of its use in inscriptions in the Valley and elsewhere, long before the reign of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh.

The Kathmandu Valley, which was then simply known as Nepāl, contained several kingdoms, each ruled by a branch of the Newar Malla dynasty.[16] We have noted that their language, Newari, possessed a substantial body of literature, both religious and secular in content, which borrowed much of its vocabulary from Sanskrit and later from Nepali itself. During the 16th and 17th centuries, there was a substantial influx of Nepali-speaking "parbatīya" people into the Valley from the west. The Valley kingdoms also conducted a limited dialogue with Gorkha; Rām Shāh is said to have had good relations with Siddhinarasingh Malla of Patan, and a number of Newar craftsmen and traders were encouraged to settle in Gorkha, as a result.[17]

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15. An extract from the biography of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh is provided by Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel (op.cit., 1974), pp.191-194.
16. The Mallas of the Valley were not related to those of western Nepal.
17. Śarmā, op.cit., 1980, p.212. Long before the invasion of the Valley, the Gorkhalis were influenced by Newar art and architecture, as is evident from even the most cursory inspection of the temple of Gorakhnāth at Gorkha. Toni Hagen: Nepal, Berne, 1961, Plates 66 and 67.

Thus, an increasingly large proportion of the Valley population became familiar with Nepali during this period, and the Newar monarchs commissioned several inscriptions in the language. This was presumably intended to facilitate a more widespread comprehension of the texts; Clark explains that the two languages, Nepali and Newari, were used concurrently in the courts and cities.[18] K.P. Malla objects to this view, making the point that the Malla rulers cultivated, or even affected, a knowledge of many languages, including Bengali, Maithili and French.[19] It would seem unlikely that these kings could have remained ignorant of Nepali, however, and Clark's views, with qualification, are probably nearer to the truth.

These inscriptions generally begin with a maṅgalācaraṇa (opening invocation) in Sanskrit, and the Nepali portion of the text is usually introduced by the phrase ataḥ punabhāṣā, or punar bhākhā, or ataḥ paraṇa bhāsā, all of which can be translated as "the vernacular", as distinct from ataḥ paraṇa deśabhākhā, "the local vernacular" which usually refers to Newari in Valley inscriptions.

The Rānī Pokharī Inscription (Rānī Pokharī Śilālekha) is the best-known of its period, and dates from A.D. 1670. Rānī Pokharī is a small artificial lake near the centre of the city of Kathmandu, which was excavated during the reign of Pratāp Malla. According to the inscription, the lake was filled with water brought from rivers, streams and lakes in India and Nepal which are accredited with special sanctity (tīrtha). The same text is repeated on four stone tablets which certainly predate the Gorkhali invasion by more than 100 years. Despite this, the greater part of the text (thirty-three lines) was written in Nepali, with an introduction (two and a half lines) in Sanskrit and a conclusion (five lines) in Newari. It is significant that the Newari conclusion presupposes the reader's comprehension of

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18. T.W.Clark: "The Rānīpokharī Inscription, Kathmandu", BSOAS, vol.20 (1957), p.185.
19. Kamal P. Malla: Classical Newari Literature. A Sketch, Kathmandu, 1982, p.32.

the Nepali text which precedes it.[20] Much of the Nepali section of the text is taken up by a long list of tīrtha, which have been omitted from the following extract;

> ataḥ paraṇa bhākhā. śrī śrī jaya pratāpa malla devana āphule sāstra herikana asaṅkhyāta punya dekhikana nikāsikana gaṅgā ādi nānā tīrthako jala leikana mahārājadhirāja nepāleśvara rājarājendra śrī śrī cakravartendra malla devako nāmale banāyāko poṣarimāhā rāṣyāko cha....eti tirtha sabai yo poṣarimāhā cha. yo poṣarimāhā snāna garikana devatarppana sandhyā ādi samasta karma jasale garyo eti tīrthamāhā snāna garyāko karmma garyāko punya phala pāvanu cha.[21]

"The vernacular. Shrī Shrī Jaya Pratāp Malla Deva, having himself consulted the scriptures, having seen (in this act) countless merits, having drawn forth (the water) having brought the waters of various holy rivers such as the Ganges etc., has put them into the lake which was excavated in the name of the Mahārājadhirāja, the Lord of Nepal, King of kings, Shrī Shrī Chakravartendra Malla...(list of tīrtha)...; all these sacred waters are in this lake. Whosoever performs all the religious duties, such as the offering of oblations to the gods, oblations to the ancestors and evening oblations etc. after bathing in this lake will obtain all the merit and rewards which come from the performance of the duties of bathing at all these places....."

Despite the usual archaic spellings, such as bhākhā (bhāṣā, "language"), rāṣyako (rākheko, "put"), pāvanu (pāunu, "to obtain"), etc., this language resembles modern Nepali quite closely. There is some evidence of Braj or Hindi vocabulary; the word nāhi occurs

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20. Clark, op.cit., 1957.
21. Clark, op.cit., 1957. Pokharel (op.cit., 1974, pp.85-87) also published the text of this inscription, but the spellings in his text are suspiciously consistent, especially in their treatment of hrasva and dīrgha vowels.

later in the text,[22] as does the postposition māhā, which is clearly a form of the postposition mā, "in", and was also shared with Hindi. Pronouns do not take an "oblique" case when a modern grammarian might expect them to do so; for instance, yo poṣarimāhā, "in this lake" would now be written, more correctly, as yas pokharīmā. Early Jumla inscriptions used an oblique form of the same pronoun in phrases such as es kanakapatra bhitara.[23] This grammatical ambivalence is still discernible in modern Nepali. In the Rānī Pokharī inscription the Nepali language appears to have evolved to a point where it resembles the style of language espoused by early 19th century poets such as Bhānubhakta, which in itself varies but little from the "Kathmandu Nepali" now regarded as standard.

Medicinal Texts

The 17th and early 18th centuries produced a number of Nepali texts which were loosely concerned with Ayurvedic medicine, animal husbandry and human anatomy. Most of these were translated from Sanskrit sources, and often in a somewhat haphazard and piecemeal fashion. Thus they are not original compositions and they lack true literary merit.

The Bājaparikṣā[24] gives details of the various maladies to which hunting falcons are prone, and prescribes their remedies. No date can be ascribed to the text with any degree of certainty, but it is generally regarded as having been written in the mid-17th century. Its provenance is also a problem; Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel suggests that it might emanate from the Jumla region, as falconry was apparently popular there during the period in question.[25]

The language of Bājaparikṣā provides a marked contrast with that of the Rānī Pokharī Inscription, including a number of words which are reminiscent of the Braj dialect of Hindi, such as āvata ("comes") and

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22. In lines 28-29: kehi pāpa yo poṣarimāhā garnu nāhi.
23. Pokharel, op.cit., 1974, p.8.
24. The text of Bājaparikṣā is reproduced in full in (ibid.), pp.75-82.
25. Ibid., p.202.

aisā ("such", "like this") which is used consistently in place of modern Nepali yasto. The construction of temporal clauses reflects the Hindi construction;

jaba vāja dubalo ho ta upāu kahuṃ[26]

"When the hawk is thin, this is the cure."

Very few Nepali texts of this period are now available in a published form, and so it would be rash to come to any conclusions concerning the evolution of literary Nepali on the basis of a single example which presented the symptoms of a supposed "Hindi influence". Yet it would seem reasonable to assume that regional dialects of Nepali must have existed in the 17th century. If so, their existence would surely become apparent in the few examples of 17th-century written Nepali which are now extant. The language of the Bājaparikṣā cannot be satisfactorily identified with any of the modern Nepali dialects, but the contrast it provides to the language of the Rānī Pokharī Inscription does serve to demonstrate that the standardisation of textual Nepali produced outside central Nepal was a process which had not even begun.

Jvarotpatti Cikitsā, "The Treatment of the Arising of Fever", is another medicinal text which is attributed to one Vāṇivilās Jyotirvinda of Mahākāli ancal and dates from 1716 A.D.[27] It is a bhāṣā ṭīkā, a vernacular paraphrase or commentary, derived from an older treatise, which was probably written in Sanskrit. It, too, is practically devoid of literary merit, its prose being stilted and undeveloped, and broken into short clipped sentences like the following;

atisāra ho. bhrama ho. hātapāu-sarvāṅga jalanta ho. jyā tyā bahuta vola. vahu tīśa ho. bhrama dāha pralāpa kara. śoka mukha tito ho. nāka mukha piyalā hun. murchā ho. itika pitta jvarakā cihna hun.[28]

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26. Ibid., p.75.
27. The text of Jvarotpatti Cikitsā is reproduced in full in (ibid), pp.97-103.
28. Ibid., p.97.

"(If) there is dysentery, delusion and the arms, legs and entire body are burning, (if) much nonsense is spoken, and there be great pungency, delusion, burning and senseless chatter, (if) the mouth of the afflicted (tastes) acrid, his nose and mouth be yellow, and swooning occurs, these bilious symptoms are signs of fever."

The passage is so fragmented that it can barely pass as Nepali prose, and is better regarded as a very concise summary of the original text.

The Prāyaścit Pradīp of Premanidhi Pant,[29] which dates from 1723 A.D., is accorded a slightly higher degree of literary respect. Pant was a court priest to the Rājā Malaibama of the kingdom of Parbat, and he originally composed the work in Sanskrit, later adding a Nepali summary to each chapter.[30] Prāyaścit Pradīp, "The Light of Atonement", is primarily moralistic and didactic in content;

nadīmahā rūkhakī chāyāmāhā vāṭāmāhā goṭhamāhā pāṇimāhā bhasmamāhā hātapāu dhoiṇu, āgo gāi strī vāmana suryyankā sammukha pani hātapāu dhoṇu, anjalile pāṇi piṇu, śutiyā āphuhoi vadālāi vyūjaunu, juvāra ṣelanu, rogikā sāta sutanu, udayāstakā suryyalāī dekhanu, nāgi strīkana dekhanu, malamūtrādi dekhaṇu, pāṇimāhā thūka mūtra purīṣavīryya phālanu, agnilāi naghāuṇu, ityādika bhaṇyākā sava pāpa prakīrṇaka kahīncan.[31]

"To bathe in a river, in the shade of a tree, upon the road, in a cowshed, in water or in ashes, and to bathe whilst facing fire, a cow, a woman, a Brahmin or the sun, to drink water from one's fingers, to awaken a woman who has recently given birth, to gamble, to sleep with one who is sick, to see the sun rise or set, to see a naked woman, to see urine or faeces,

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29. The text of Prāyaścit Pradīp is reproduced in full in (ibid), pp.108-120.
30. Ibid., p.207.
31. Ibid., p.110.

to spit or urinate or throw excrement into water, to extinguish a fire; all these and other sins are called the miscellaneous sins."

Premanidhi Pant was a Brahmin from Kumaon and so it is likely that his language contains some elements of Kumaoni grammar and vocabulary;[32] several of the infinitive forms of the verbs in the above extract have the ending ṇu, which could be compared with Kumaoni -ṇo endings.[33] These endings do not occur consistently even within such a short passage, as other verbs take the normal -nu ending. As in many other "old" Nepali texts, some inanimate nouns are accorded a feminine gender, a feature which this language shares with modern khaṛī bolī Hindi.

Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh and the Divya Upadeśa

As the architect of the significant political and social changes which occurred in Nepal between 1744 and 1769, Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh, the King of Gorkha, must be regarded as the most important figure in the Nepal of his time. It is sometimes also said that it is to Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh that Nepal owes the genesis of a tradition of Nepali poetry. Certainly, the patronage extended by his darbār stimulated the composition of poetry and the translation of important Sanskrit texts during the late 18th century. Additionally, the king has left us his own writings which are useful for the light which they shed upon his character and upon the state of political and military affairs in 18th century Nepal.

The Divya Upadeśa (or Divyopadeśa) of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh was written or, more accurately, dictated to a scribe in December 1774, while the king was at Nuvākoṭ a month before his death.[34] The published text[35] is taken from a manuscript which is dated c.1800 and

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32. Ibid., p.207.
33. G.A.Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, vol.IX, part 1, pp.131-2.
34. Ludwig Stiller: Prithwinarayan Shah in the Light of Dibya Upadesh, Ranchi, 1968, p.37. Leelanateshwar Baral (Life and Writings of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh, Ph.D. thesis, London 1964, pp.9-10), suggests that the Divya Upadeśa was composed piecemeal and assembled at a later date.
35. Pokharel, op cit., 1974, pp.174-183.

so a fairly high level of fidelity to the original may be assumed.[36] It falls into two sections; the first is an historical narrative of the Gorkhali campaigns, related in the first person, leading up to the capture of Nuvākoṭ in 1744. The second part consists of a series of policy pronouncements on a variety of topics. These are written as brief comments or recommendations concerning the re-routing of trade-links, political stratagems, internal administration and so on. Observations and recommendations frequently alternate; the narrative style is concise and ever liable to become a series of pronouncements or orders;

> uprānta yo rāje duī ḍhuṅgāko tarula jasto rahecha. cīna bādasāhasita ṭhulo ghāhā rāṣanu. daṣinako samudrakā bādasāhasita ghāhā tā rāṣnu. tara tyo mahā catura cha. hindusthānā dabāī rāṣecha. sarajimīmā pari rahecha. hindusthānā jāmyo bhanyā kaṭhin parlā bhani killā ṣojana aunyā cha.[37]
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> "This kingdom is like a yam between two boulders.[38] Maintain very friendly relations with the Emperor of China. Also maintain relations with the Emperor of the southern ocean.[39] But he is very cunning. He has kept India suppressed and now he is in the Plains. Should India unite, it may become difficult for him and he will surely come in search of forts."

Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh was a shrewd and perceptive politician, fully aware of the vulnerability of Nepal's position between two giant neighbours. Indeed, many of the elements of his foreign policy, such as his suspicion of Indian domination, the retention of links with China, and the policy of free trade, can be identified in the policies

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36. Baral, op.cit., 1964, p.10.
37. Pokharel, op.cit., 1974, pp.178-179.
38. This has become a very well-known phrase, although translations vary. Stiller's rendering (op.cit., 1968, p.42) is "a gourd between two rocks".
39. I.e. the British Raj.

of the modern Nepalese state. A second extract illustrates his concern at the possibility of Indian domination of Nepalese trade;

> uprānta desakā[40] mahājanalāī goḍ prasāha deṣī ubho āuna nadinu. desakā mahājanaharū hāmrā mulukamā āyā bhannyā duniñā kaṅgāl gari chāṛdachan.[41]
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> "Do not permit Indian traders to come any further up than Goḍ Prasāha.[42] If they come into our kingdom they will make paupers of our subjects."

Seventeen letters sent by Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh to various contemporaries and allies are also extant.[43] These provide an often amusing insight into the mind of the conqueror and they are interesting both for their style and content. Most begin with a sentence which varies but little from letter to letter; some variants are given in parentheses in the following example:

> yahāṃ (jahāṃ/ihāṃ) kuśala tahāṃ kuśala (kṣem) cāhi (cāhiya) jehite sānanda (paramānanda) hoi. āge yahāṃko samācāra bhalo (niko) cha.[44]
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> "All is well here and I hope all is well there, and if so I am most happy. Further, the news from here is good."

An extract from letter number 15, addressed to Abhimānasingh, will better service to illustrate the language which was employed, and also the methods sometimes used by Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh to gain the upper hand over those he opposed or distrusted. Abhimānasingh was a general of the Gorkhali forces and Buddhikarṇa an over-ambitious minister who later usurped the Tarai principality of Morang;

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40. desa clearly refers to India in this context.
41. Pokharel, op.cit., 1974, p.179.
42. Modern Gaṛha Parsā, about 60 miles to the south of Kathmandu.
43. Baral (op.cit., 1964, pp.330-345) provides the Nepali texts of these letters.
44. Ibid.

buddhikarṇako hāti rāmro cha gare.[45] tyo hāti māhutalāi lāyera vāhāko māhuta kamāikana say 4/5 rupaiyā kavolikana so hāti cori lyāuna pathāunyā ho. māhutale cori lyāu bhanyā ta. kehi ber chaina ti māhutakā kula kavilā ta hāmrai desmahā hunan. kehi kavoli ṣātirjāmā dikana pani tyo kām gara.[46]

"They say Buddhikarṇa's elephant is very fine. Get hold of that elephant's mahout and take him into your employ. Promise him four or five hundred rupees and send him to steal the elephant. If you tell him to steal it and bring it (to you), it will take no time at all. The mahout's relatives and family are not in our country. Just give him a few assurances and make him a few promises, and do this job."

An extract from letter number 2 demonstrates his treatment of those he defeated. This was addressed to the pradhān, the village headman, of Dolakhā, in the north-eastern corner of the Kathmandu Valley, which was captured in 1754 A.D.;

timi prajā pāta hau. nāladumapūrva mero aṃval bhayo. tumi merā hajura āva. timro dhana tiyāko ma rachā garuṃlā pichā di ārko taraha garu ta (Gorakhnāth) ko kudṛṣṭi. dharma dikana tumi na āyādeṣi timro jahojāta garùlā.[47]

"You are my subjects. My territory stretches to Naldum in the east. Come into my royal presence. I shall protect your property and your wives. If I should go back on my word, I shall incur the displeasure of Gorakhnāth. If you do not come, despite my giving you my word of honour, I shall confiscate your property."

The tone of these letters is almost always imperative, but the

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45. gare is probably a marker of reported speech, related to modern Nepali re.
46. Baral, op.cit., 1964, p.344.
47. Ibid., p.331.

prose is notable for its brevity and for its omission of many of the words and constructions which are now current in modern Nepali. Even so, the language does not differ radically from its modern form. Some ambiguities and inconsistencies do remain in both grammar and spelling; the middle grade honorific second person pronoun, timī, is spelled timi, timī, tumi and tumī, and the ā endings of adjectives, now denoting the "oblique" case, or plurality, alternate with the nominative singular ending o. A few Persian words also appear; these can be attributed to the influence of Indian monarchical convention which is also evident in the title of Śāha adopted by the Gorkhali kings.[48] Other terms were introduced during this period, including hajur, which has the original (Persian) meaning of "the royal presence", but which is now also used as a third person pronoun denoting the king of Nepal, or as a second person pronoun usually translated as "sir".

Perhaps this miscellany of letters and pronouncements cannot be regarded as true literature, but it is still to the times of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh that we must look for the beginnings of a coherent and continuous literary tradition in the Nepali language. From the relative consistency of the grammar and spelling of the written Nepali of the late 18th century there emerges a language which appears to have acquired a direction to the course of its evolution.

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48. Śarmā, op.cit., 1980, p.209.

Chapter 12

Devotion and Heroism: The "Formative" Period

Although the Nepali prose compositions of the second half of the 18th century were generally unoriginal, consisting mainly of translations from Sanskrit literature, paraphrases and commentaries, a few poetic works of undoubted originality and some quality do survive. It is to this period and to these poets that modern Nepali scholars now turn in search of antecedents for the beginning of true creative writing, which is generally regarded as having commenced in the early 19th century with Bhānubhakta and his near-contemporaries. Scholars researching into the history of their national language[1] have attempted, with some success, to seek out a literature of some antiquity and Nepali literary histories[2] usually begin by mentioning the names of these poets and detailing some of the features of their poetry. Further research into other sources,[3] however, reveals something of a paucity of available material from which to draw conclusions. Although several poets of the period can be readily named, no more than two short poems can be attributed to any of them.

Heroic poetry

Although other varieties of poetry were no doubt composed between c.1750 and c.1800 A.D., the term Vīr Kāl, the "Age of Heroic Poetry", has been applied to the period. As much of the poetry does concern itself with themes of valour and conquest, the title is not wholly unsuitable. The hero (nāyaka) of each poem of this type is

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1. Such as the late Bāburām Ācārya, Dayārām Śreṣṭha "Sambhava" and Bālacandra Śarmā.
2. A typical example is Tānāsarmā's Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, (Kathmandu, 1970).
3. Such as Dayārām Śreṣṭha Sambhava (ed.), Vīrakālin Kavitā (Kathmandu, 1977), in which most "heroic" verse of this period is published.

generally the king who reigned at the time; Suvānand Dās refers to Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh as pṛthvī kṛṣṇa autāri, "Pṛthvī, the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa", and Udayānand Arjyāl calls Pratāp Singh iśvara, "the Lord".[4]

Nepalese monarchs had always employed priests and pandits at their courts; the presence at the palace of a Brahmin who could oversee the various rituals and interpret Hindu dogma was felt to be both essential and auspicious. Many of these pandits had literary pretentions, writing first in Sanskrit, and later in Nepali. Several of the earliest Nepali poets were indeed court pandits. It would seem that the Gorkhali kings extended patronage to astrologers, poets and scholars too, in addition to the obligatory Brahmin priest. To what extent these arrangements were regularised is not clear, but the tone and content of this poetry reflect the dependence of the poet upon a royal patron for economic support. It was very much a case of jasko śakti usko bhakti;[5] "devotion to whoever was powerful", and economic motivation cannot have been a minor element prompting the expression of bhakti to the king. The relationship between poet and royal patron in 18th century Nepal has hardly been explored, but the following brief extracts from the poetry of Udayānand give some indication of the poet's need to praise his king;

chuṭaphuṭa pasi āyā gun liyā kām lāyā[6]

"Anyone who came (to the king) had use made of his qualities,
and was put to work."

tyār garun kavi anek ritamahāṃ
dān ṣarac gari pugos na ta kāhāṃ[7]

"Now may poets relate (these things) in many ways,
But whatever may be expended, it will never suffice."

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4. Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya: Prāthamik Kālīn Kavi ra Kāvya Pravṛtti, Kathmandu, 1975, p.63.
5. Ibid., p.63.
6. Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, p.34.
7. Ibid., p.35.

kāṃa dhenu nṛpa kīrti sakalmā[8]

"The king is like a wish-granting cow, famous in everything."

The following complete verse, by Suvānand Dās, is clearly illustrative of the poet's need to express utter dependence;

nugāmā santāpa sahyā jivako yekalo bhayā
dhanako duvalo bhañā bhokakaṇ bhorjana nāhiṃ
kām karuṃ dāhi nāhi vatayeko karma nāhiṃ
ṭhaṇḍisaṃ vastrā nāhi rājaibhakti kṛti jāni
lāune suvā nandadāsa hai[9]

"I endured suffering in Nugā[10] and became alone, of one life only,
Utterly poor, I lacked even food for my hunger,
I would work, but my body is weak; I have no means of support,
I have no clothes to keep me from the cold but oh King,
Suvānand Dās wears devotion to you, knowing your fame."

Suvānand Dās

Suvānand was evidently a contemporary of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh. His poem, variously entitled Vīr Gāthā,[11] or Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ ,[12] was probably composed after the Gorkhali conquest of the Valley from second-hand reports of the events which had taken place.[13] Despite the somewhat elevated status accorded to Suvānand Dās, only one poem of less than fifty complete lines remains of his poetry. (One would assume that any other works attributed to this poet would have been published by now, if they existed.)[14] This poem describes Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh's

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8. Ibid., p.35.
9. Ibid., p.28.
10. According to Sambhava, Suvānand Dās was a Newar, born in a village called Nugā, ibid., p.6.
11. This is the title given to it by Sambhava (op.cit., 1977, p.24) and Upādhyāya (op.cit., 1975, p.14).
12. This is the title under which the same poem is published in Churamani Bandhu (ed.): Sājhā Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1967, p.1.
13. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.15.
14. In his Nepali Literature. Background and History (Kathmandu, 1978, p.16), Abhi Subedi gives the impression that a number of other poems

(Contd. on next page.....)

preparations for battle, his pilgrimage to Banaras and so on. The penultimate verse describes a banquet and it is linguistically the clearest passage of the whole poem;

nepālako sinki luṭi maṅrātako ghile bhuṭi
pālpāko lyāva hiṅga jiro risiṅgako lyāva piro
tanahuṃko bhātasita bhīrkoṭako dālasita
kancana kaṭaurā bhari svavarṇakā thaliyā bhari
aṣṭadala cauki vasi gaṅgājala jhāri bhari
puruva muhuṇḍā gari māhārājako jiunāra banāva hai
ṣānu sāhi dājubhāī darajanī māna hai
ṣanu sāhi citta jora tanahuṃkā taṅga tori[15]

"Radishes are plundered from Nepal and fried in ghee from Mangrāt
Bring the cumin and chilli of Pālpā and the red peppers of Rising
With the rice of Tanahun and the dal of Bhīrkoṭ,
A copper bowl is filled, and a golden plate too,
Seated upon the throne of eight families, they fill a vessel
with Ganges water,
Turn to the east and prepare the king's feast,
The king and his brothers eat and are afforded dozens of honours
And after he had eaten, he who brought down the insolence of
Tanahun turned his mind to conversation."

This verse seems to have been intended as a symbolic representation of the Gorkhali conquests. There are references to the subordinated kingdoms of Nepal (the Kathmandu Valley), Mangrāt, Pālpā, Rising, Tanahun and Bhīrkoṭ, and Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh is described as tanahuṃkā taṅga tori, which is tentatively translated as "he who brought down the insolence of Tanahun". One of the peculiarities of the poem is the use of the apparently meaningless word hai, which seems to add force to a statement and to provide a constant rhyme. This is more conspicuous in other verses but is present in the above passage (lines 6 and 7). It cannot be fully related to the modern Nepali hai,

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attributed to Suvānand Dās are extant, but other writers on the same subject make no mention of them.

15. Quoted from Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, pp.27-28.

which is appended to a statement or request in the colloquial language to request affirmation or consent, nor to khaṛī bolī Hindi hai, the third person singular of the present tense of the verb "to be." Although parts of this poem are a little obscure, its language is admired for the absence of Sanskrit influence upon its choice of vocabulary, and for its supposed imitation of folk-metres which are still popular.[16]

Śaktivallabha and Udayānand Arjyāl

Śaktivallabha Arjyāl was probably a court pandit, chiefly concerned with Sanskrit literature. His Sanskrit scholarship may have promoted Sanskrit metres in Nepali verse among poets contemporary with him.[17] Śaktivallabha left only two verses of Nepali poetry to posterity,[18] and he is more noteworthy for his translation of his own Sanskrit drama, Hāsyakadamba, into Nepali.[19] This earned him the title of "First Nepali Dramatist".[20]

Considerably more is known about Udayānand Arjyāl, nephew of Śaktivallabha. Although familiar with Sanskrit, he seems to have preferred the vernacular as a literary medium, and specialised in the versification of stories and narratives. His Purānu Bātako Arjī,[21] a poem of twenty-six four-line verses, takes its theme from the reign

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16. Upādhyāya (op.cit., 1975, p.33) discerns some influences from the Braj literary dialect of Hindi in the poetry of Suvānand Dās, but he praises the poets' language for its nepālīpan ("Nepali-ness"), nevertheless.
17. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.38.
18. These are published in Sambhava (op.cit., 1977, p.29) under the title Tanahuṃ-Bhakuṇḍo.
19. An extract from Hāsyakadamba is published in Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel: Pānc Saya Varṣa, Kathmandu, 1974, pp.259-279.
20. A second Nepali drama attributed to Śaktivallabha Arjyāl, and entitled Jayaratnākar Nāṭak, was published c.1970. Tānāsarmā: Nepāli Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.21.
21. This poem is published under this title in Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, pp.30-37, and under the title Siṃhapratāp Śāha in Bandhu, op.cit., 1967, pp.3-7.

of Pratāp Singh (1775-1778), although Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh and his son Bahādur Shāh are mentioned. Thus it was probably composed between 1786 and 1793.[22] The last few verses of the poem are quite philosophical in tone;

> jāt kām candhanmā pusāka thitikā dekhdai ṭhaharnyā anī
> nakkal pāri chapāi bhesa kahiṃ kyai āyā garyā ḍhāṇṭ panī
> cāṇḍai sāsti sameta pāi thitikā jālma milyo tyo banī
> yastā nyāya thiyā buḍhāharū mahāṃ hunthyā aṭarnit bharnā[23]

"A man's caste and occupation are recognisable in his attire
and from the mark upon his forehead,
If a man hid his caste by copying another man's clothing
and through deception, he would be easily found out,
He would be punished without delay, and made to live
according to the natural order,
Such was justice, and one of the elders was made an attorney."

Udayānand Arjyāl's language seems more refined than that of most of his contemporaries. As a poet of the "second generation", he may have paid more attention to his language than other poets. The existence of a variety of styles in the poetry of any given period must indicate that stylistic choices were being made by a number of poets. If the very first "step" of Nepali literary development was the departure from a Sanskrit medium, perhaps attention to linguistic "quality", and the emergence of stylistic preferences among Nepali poets was the second. Udayānand also widens the scope of the contemporary Vīr Kāl tradition with his inclusion of social detail and philosophical observation. The word aṭarnit, "attorney" is possibly the first loanword to have been taken from the English language by a Nepali poet.

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22. Sambhava, op.cit., 1977, p.10.
23. Quoted from ibid., p.36.

The Treaty of Segauli

The Nepali Vīr Kāl was brief and the poetry it produced was by no means thematically uniform. Nevertheless, the few poems extant from the second half of the 18th century do tend to adopt a royal hero, and to eulogise his military exploits. It is important to remember that this period of Nepalese history saw the most spectacular military successes scored by the Gorkhali forces, as the borders of Nepal were pushed westwards as far as Kangra, in modern Himachal Pradesh, and to Sikkim in the east. It was an era of great national pride and military ambition. Thus the political fortunes of the new rulers of Nepal were reflected in the proud poetry of the time. By 1815, Nepalese incursions to the east and west had expanded the domain of Gorkha to its maximum extent, where its borders had to be defended against the British, the Tibetans and the Chinese. The brief Anglo-Nepalese wars of October 1814 to December 1815 and February-March 1816 brought an abrupt end to Gorkhali expansion. The Treaty of Segauli, ratified on 2nd December, 1815, ceded all the territories west of the Mahakali River, the land between the Mechi and Teesta rivers in the east and three huge stretches of the Tarai to the East India Company.[24] The loss of the Tarai lands dealt a severe blow to the Nepalese economy, and threatened its political unity, as it sheered away from the Nepalese state the resources that paid the cost of central government.[25]

This defeat at the hands of the British certainly caused a gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere to prevail among the Nepalese political élite.[26] The extent to which this atmosphere influenced the literature contemporary with it is also quite remarkable. The inspiration for the Vīr Kāl poetry was severely dampened and poets turned to religious verse. This is sometimes described as a process of "turning inwards", away from the

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24. The text of the Treaty of Segauli is given by Ludwig Stiller in: The Silent Cry, Kathmandu, 1976, pp.22-24.
25. Ibid., p.19.
26. This atmosphere is evoked by Narahari Ācārya in his article "Nepālī Sāhityako Mādhyamikakāl: Aitihāsik ra Sāmājik Pṛṣṭhabhūmi", Vāṇmaya, vol.1, no.1, Kirtipur, 1980, pp.43-49.

unpleasant realities of Nepalese defeat, to the more permanent inspiration of devotional Hinduism.[27] This distinct alteration in the tone of Nepali poetry indicates that a close relationship between the Nepalese political and social élite and the major figures of Nepali literature existed at the time, and that the latter were as affected by the outcome of these events as were their patrons.

Devotional Literature

The poetry extant from the period c.1800-c.1870 is dominated by religious and devotional themes, although there is again no one trend in the development of language or literature which could be said to have been definitive, except perhaps the effect of political uncertainties and war upon the general philosophy of Nepali poets. Most composed verse based on themes drawn from the great Hindu legends such as Bhagavad Gītā and Mahābhārata; this was a variety of poetry which reached its highest expression in the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta Ācārya. Many poets were also scholars of Sanskrit, and embarked upon direct translations into Nepali from the same sources. The heroic figure of Bhīmsen Thāpā[28] inspired some patriotic poetry which is reminiscent of the Vīr Kāl verse.

Again, the term Bhakti Kāl would not be wholly adequate as a classification of all of the Nepali literature of this period. As we have seen, literary historians propose various schemes for the periodisation of Nepali literature. One such division has been made with reference to Hindi literature, and the terms Vīr Kāl and Bhakti Kāl have both been culled from this source. The Nepali Vīr Kāl was ill-defined and relatively undeveloped, being represented by a mere handful of poets, but it was generally a response to historical factors similar to those which prompted the advent of a related, earlier period of Hindi

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27. Or from the realities of the mundane world to the religious utopia of Rām Rājya. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, pp.27-28.
28. The most exhaustive study of Bhīmsen's career is Cittaranjan Nepālī's Janaral Bhīmsen Thāpā ra Tatkālīn Nepāl, Kathmandu, 1956, from which Stiller drew much of the material for his The Silent Cry (op.cit., 1976).

literary history, that is, the existence of one or more prosperous royal courts.[29] The Nepali Bhakti Kāl, despite its greater length and the relative ease with which it can be defined, is less easily equated with the corresponding era of Hindi literary history. The Hindi Bhakti Kāl was, broadly, a vernacularisation of religious texts which occurred concurrently with the removal of obstacles to access to spheres of religious activities for castes other than the Brahmins. These changes first occurred in Tamil Nadu before the 9th century A.D., and swept through India over the next seven centuries.[30] The Hindi Bhakti Kāl encompasses four hundred years, from the 14th to the 17th centuries,[31] thus predating the emergence of Nepali devotional poetry by many generations. Again, Nepal can be said to have been a cultural zone which was peripheral to and isolated from the centres of north Indian cultural and linguistic innovation. Changes in the literature of the 18th and 19th centuries have all been too recent, and have occurred too rapidly, to be regarded as isolated developments prompted by purely indigenous factors which proceeded without recourse to extensive borrowing from other literatures.[32] Although political misfortunes and a decline in national prestige caused poets to become more introspective, Nepal's contacts with India were becoming more regular, and literate Nepalese, some of whom procured their education in Banaras and elsewhere, became familiar with north Indian vernacular literatures.

During the first half of the 19th century, the written Nepali language became slightly more colloquial and standardised, but there were also some poets who returned to a more "classical" and less accessible

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29. For an account of the Vīr Kāl of Hindi literature, see Ram Awadh Dwivedi: A Critical Survey of Hindi Literature, 1966, Chapter 2: "The Period of Bardic Poetry" (pp.13-28).
30. Theodore de Bary (ed.): Sources of Indian Tradition, vol.1, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp.322-327.
31. Dwivedi, op.cit., 1966, chapter 3, "The Period of Devotional Poetry", pp.29-38.
32. The influence of Hindi bhakti poetry upon that of Nepali is examined by Mathurādatta Pāṇḍey in Nepāli aur Hindī: Bhakti-Kāvya kā Tulanātmak Adhyayan, Delhi, 1970.

style of poetic diction which adhered more rigidly to Sanskrit poetic conventions. This kind of formal Nepali poetry has always had its exponents, exemplified in the more recent past by Lekhnāth Paudyāl. The poets of this period are better-known than their predecessors and more of their works have survived. Although none of them could be said to have been of a stature equal to that of Bhānubhakta, the Ādi Kavi, the study of their poetry is useful, for it provides a context for the appearance of the Nepali "founder poet".

Indiras, Vidyāraṇyakeśarī Arjyāl and Vasant Śarmā

These three poets appear to have been approximately contemporary with one another, and their poetry and language have much in common. All of them had been educated in the Sanskrit tradition and so they turned to the Sanskrit classics for the themes of their poetry, much of which was directly translated from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Mahābhārata. This poetry is generally regarded as being purely devotional, but some of it does include passages which are more accurately described as śṛṅgār or "sensuous" poetry.

To some extent, these poets pioneered the translation of the Sanskrit classics into Nepali and they lacked any tradition to fall back upon. Bālacandra Śarmā suggests that the translations of this period were of three varieties namely a) chāyānuvāda, in which words and phrases were translated literally, and metre could be altered, b) bhāvānuvāda, free translation, in which the import of the story was of prime importance, but could be rephrased and, to some extent, re-ordered, and c) padānuvāda, in which the original metres were retained.[33] The same criticisms are levelled at the language of each of these poets by scholars of Nepali literary history. The first is that metre dictated spelling and punctuation to a degree which is now unacceptable. Vowel length was highly inconsistent and the halant was affixed arbitrarily to

33. Bālacandra Śarmā: "Indīras, Vidyāraṇyakeśarī ra Vasant Śarmā", in Kṛṣṇacandrasingh Pradhān (ed.): Sājhā Samālocanā, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, pp.43-44.

words in which the inherent a ending is now compulsorily retained. Even Sanskrit tatsam words, now considered sacrosanct in their original spellings, were shortened to suit a particular metre, for instance, deva, nāga and prema were sometimes written with the halant, i.e. dev, nāg and prem.[34] The second criticism is of the use of feminine gender for inanimate nouns. This was a common phenomenon in early Nepali, occurring, as we have seen, in the Jumla inscriptions, but it is obsolete in modern grammar, and even in the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta. Examples are phrases such as caraṇaki lālī, "the redness of the feet", timri janmale, "by your birth"[35] and so on, in which the inanimate nouns lālī and janma are given feminine gender. The third criticism is that these poets used a great quantity of Hindi vocabulary, and there are several examples of phrases from Avadhi and Bhojpuri devotional poetry being borrowed intact.[36] It was perhaps not surprising that these early Nepali translators should refer to north Indian vernacular literature for vocabulary and style, as they were virtually the initiators of a new tradition in Nepali poetry.

Little is known of Indiras save his date of birth (1827)[37] and whatever else can be gleaned from his only surviving poem, the Gopikāstuti.[38] This was a translation of the first half of the tenth canto of the Śrīmadbhāgavata,[39] and it amounted to nineteen verses. Indiras retained the original Sanskrit metre and the whole poem is not noted for any great literary merit, as the retention of this metre tends to dictate its other characteristics, and the vocabulary of the translation is often obscure.

Slightly more is known about the life of Vidyāraṇyakeśarī Arjyāl (b.1806). He was born in Sunākhānī village, in Nuvākoṭ district, the son of a Brahmin scholar whose brother was the rājapurohit at the court of the king Girvāṇa Yuddha in Kathmandu.[40] His aged father moved to

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34. Ibid., p.43.
35. From Indiras, quoted by Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.43.
36. Ibid., p.43.
37. According to Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.17.
38. Published in Bāburām Ācārya: Purānā Kavi ra Kavitā, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1978, pp.10-16.
39. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.41.
40. Ibid., p.44.

Banaras whilst Vidyāraṇya was a child, and so his son received a traditional education there while his father waited for death beside the holy Ganges. After the loss of his father, the poet returned to Nepal, taking up residence in Kathmandu from 1837 until his death.[41] His earliest surviving poem is Yugalagīta,[42] a translation from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in twenty-eight verses, which mainly employed the śārdūlavikrīḍita metre which was later made famous by Bhānubhakta.[43] His second work extant in Nepali is the Draupadīstuti,[44] a much "freer" and interpretative composition, based on the Sabhā Parva canto of the Mahābhārata. A number of different metres were employed in its ten verses but the poem is criticised for the Hindi influence it exhibits, despite its relative originality. Phrases such as

huṅgi mai janama janmaki cerī

"I will be handmaiden from incarnation to incarnation",

and ṭuṭi gai hṛdaya kṛṣṇa! hamāri

"Oh (Kṛṣṇa)! My heart is broken"

would seem to have been taken intact from Hindi devotional texts.[45] Arjyāl's third poem was Veṇugīta, which has not been published.[46] Abhi Subedi discerns a "curious blend of sensuousness and devotion" in his poetry.[47]

Vasant Śarmā was probably an older man than his two contemporaries, but he was equally influenced by Hindi devotional verse and equally willing to adjust spellings according to the dictates of metre.[48] His poetry is also criticised for a few grammatical errors and inconsistencies it contains. For instance, Kṛṣṇa is sometimes accorded a high-grade

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41. Śarmā states that he died in 1855, ibid., p.44.
42. Published in Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, pp.17-27.
43. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.44.
44. Published in Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, pp.27-28.
45. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.43.
46. Ibid., p.46.
47. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.19.
48. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.47.

honorific status; garnubhayo, sometimes a middle grade honorific; gare.[49] Vasant's Śrīkṛṣṇacaritra[50] is considerably longer than the poems of his contemporaries, however, amounting to 169 verses. It was based on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, but the chronology of the events of Kṛṣṇa's life is a little awry,[51] and some of the more sensuous episodes are omitted completely.[52] Vasant was the first Nepali poet to break with the Sanskrit literary convention which holds that the only genre fitting for the narration of the whole life of the nāyaka is the epic poem, the mahākāvya. Writers of episodic poetry, khaṇḍa kāvya, were supposed to limit themselves to specific events or episodes.[53] Thus Vasant Śarmā is credited with the composition of the first Nepali khaṇḍa kāvya, and his other major translation, the Mahābhārata, receives very little attention. Despite the criticisms mentioned above, Vasant is generally held to have been the best of these three poets; some of his verses have been compared favourably with the poetry of Bhānubhakta,[54] for the colloquial character of their language ("pure" Nepali words such as poi, "husband", damlā, "tether" and agghora, "exceedingly", are in evidence),[55] and for their generally lucid nature.

Gumānī Pant (1790-1849)

Lokarāja Pant, usually known by his pen-name, Gumānī, is a curious figure, wholly unrepresentative of his time. He was a native of Almora, the capital of Kumaon, which was under Gorkhali rule until 1815. He is regarded by Nepali scholars as a Nepali poet, and by Hindi scholars as an early exponent of khaṛī bolī verse,[56] but his mother-tongue was probably Kumaoni, and he wrote in a peculiar mixture of Kumaoni, Nepali

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49. Ibid., pp.49-50.
50. Published in Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, pp.35-64
51. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.51.
52. Subedi (op.cit., 1968, p.19) accuses Vasant of being a "dry" poet, because he omits to translate the "vulgar" portion of the Kṛṣṇacaritra.
53. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.51.
54. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.20.
55. Śarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.50.
56. Subedi (op.cit., 1978, p.17) gives a reference to an article by Sudhir Shah, entitled Gumānī: Khaṛī Bolī ke Ādikavi ("Gumānī, Founder Poet of Standard Hindi") in Ājkal, May 1977.

and Sanskrit.[57] His poetry seems virtually devoid of devotional content; the following verse is sometimes construed as satire;

dina-dina khajanākā bhārikā bokanāle
śiva-śiva culimaiṃkā bāla nai eka kaikā
tadapi muluka tero choḍi nai koi bhājā
iti vadati gumānī dhanya gorkhālī rājā[58]

"We carry away great loads of taxes, day in, day out,
And so, oh Shiva, not a hair is left upon our heads,
Despite this, not a single person has fled your kingdom,
So says Gumani: Blessed be the Gorkhali Raja."

Abhi Subedi believes this to be a poem expressing sincere devotion to the king of Gorkha,[59] but the first two lines would seem to qualify that devotion, or even to negate it. There is evidence to suggest that the gross revenue demand made by the Gorkhas in Kumaon was exceptionally large,[60] and that Kumaon was never wholly integrated into Greater Nepal.[61] Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya comments that "it would be foolish to regard this as a poem expressing devotion to the king".[62] The poem, however, remains open to interpretation.

Yadunāth and Raghunāth

Although the poems of Indiras, Vasant Śarmā and Vidyāraṇyakeśarī Arjyāl are to some extent typical of the Nepali poetry of the first half of the 19th century, a number of other poets were also writing more original poems which sometimes contained references to the historical events of the period. One such poet was Yadunāth Pokharyāl, a native

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57. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.17.
58. Quoted in Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.85.
59. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.17.
60. In his biography of B.H.Hodgson, Hunter states that the gross revenue demand levied by the British in Kumaon in 1816 was only half of that levied by the Gorkhas in 1812. William W. Hunter: Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson, London, 1896, p.46.
61. Stiller, op.cit., 1976, p.27.
62. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.85.

of the Saptari district of the eastern Tarai, whose Stutipadya[63] contains much of interest. No date has been satisfactorily established for the composition of the Stutipadya, nor for the poet's birth. Tānāsarmā[64] asserts that Yadunāth was born in 1808, and composed his poems between 1837 and 1841, Bāburām[65] suggests a birth-date of 1791 and composition date between 1833 and 1837, and Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya[66] is convincing in his argument that historical references date the Stutipadya to 1816-1832.

Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya includes Yadunāth in his Vīr Kāl chapter.[67] This is not without justification; although the Kṛṣṇacaritra,[68] a poem of twenty-one verses, is strictly devotional in content, the later Stutipadya adopts Bhīmsen Thāpā as its nāyak and refers to him as bhim autāra. Written some time after the Segauli Treaty, the three poems which make up the Stutipadya are defiantly patriotic, reflecting a Nepalese nationalism which had never been expressed in Nepali poetry before. The published version of the Stutipadya was taken from manuscripts held in the Bir Library;[69] the title, which can be translated as "Elegaic Verses", covers the three published poems. The first consists of forty-five verses which give a eulogistic description of Bhīmsen Thāpā and the Nepalese army, and pour some scorn on the British, who were represented in Kathmandu by Edward Gardner at that time.[70] The second poem is shorter, comprising only sixteen verses, but it deals with similar themes, making some references to the

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63. Parts 1-3 published in Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, pp.71-85. Part 2 is published in Bandhu, op.cit., 1967, pp.8-10 under the title Kampū.
64. Op.cit., 1970, p.31.
65. Op.cit., 1978, pp.65-66.
66. Op.cit., 1975, pp.60-62.
67. Ibid., pp.60-83.
68. Published in Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, pp.67-70.
69. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.20.
70. Article no.8 of the Segauli Treaty had stipulated that "accredited ministers" of both states should "reside at the Court of the other". Thus a British Resident was stationed in Kathmandu from that time onwards. Stiller, op.cit., 1976, p.24.

contemporary system of administration, and to the king, Rājendravikram Shāh. The third poem comprises only nine verses (it seems that the first three were lost), and is a rather dry and methodical enumeration of the Nepalese forts and garrisons.

Occasionally, patriotic sentiments are expressed quite emphatically;

gorā ta śurā dui eka hunchan
gorṣāmahāṃ kātara āja kun chan
gāran ḍarāī pani ciṭṭhi leṣyo
nepālakā vīra sipāhi deṣyo[71]

"One or two of the white men are brave, it's true,
But who is a coward in Gorkha today!
Even Gardner was afraid, and he wrote a letter,
When he saw the courageous soldiers of Nepal."

In other verses, the sentiments of the Vīr Kāl are "wrapped in the veil of śṛṅgāra".[72] While praising Bhīmsen Thāpā, Yadunāth sometimes digresses from his subject to provide some of the earliest examples of the romantic description of natural beauty in Nepali poetry;

baḍī bāgamāhāṃ anek phula phulyāko
bilāitki mevā pavanle jhulyāko
bhramar jāi phulko miṭho ras linyāko
kahūṃ kyā tamāsā bahutai ṣulyāko[73]

"In the great garden many flowers are flowering,
And English fruit-trees are swayed by the breeze,
Bees take away the blossoms' sweet nectar,
Oh what can I say of this fine sight all around?"

Yadunāth was by no means averse to borrowing Hindi vocabulary, and to according a feminine gender to inanimate objects such as mevā, fruit trees. A number of English words also appear in his poems; these are usually military terms such as jarnel, "general", bam, "bomb" or gaurnal, "governor" which might be a legacy of the Anglo-Nepalese

71. Stutipadya (1) verse 23. Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, p.75.
72. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.64.
73. Stutipadya (1), verse 33. Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, p.77.

wars. In general, however, his language is colloquial and simple, and is praised accordingly.

Raghunāth Bhaṭṭa (also known as Raghunāth Pokharyāl) was probably the brother-in-law of Yadunāth, and the two poets sometimes corresponded in verse.[74] Born in 1811, Raghunāth is noted for his translation of the Sundarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa,[75] which probably predated Bhānubhakta's version by only a few years. Raghunāth's version is considered to be over-contrived, and too free in its interpretation of the original text, and therefore inferior to the latter.[76] Several other poems are extant, however, one of which describes the series of assassinations and political factionalism which preceded the Koṭ Massacre of 1837 with a rather laboured allegory:

> ākāsko juna śera ho u pani tā ghāyal bhayā corale
> sirko var juna ho thiyo u pani tā ghāyal bhayā sārale
> siddhaikā juna jaṇ thiyā u vira tā ghāyal bhayā bhorale
> bhāgyaile paripāṭha pardacha ki yo kī buddhikā jorale[77]
>
> "He who is the lion of the sky[78] was wounded by a thief,
> He who is the best of heads[79] was grievously injured too,
> The warrior who was the prince of success[80] was wounded
> by treachery,
> Has Fate brought about this series of events, or has the
> force of intellect?"

Tānāsarmā makes the observation that Raghunāth was alone among

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74. Some samples from their correspondence are given by Bāburām Ācārya (op.cit., 1978, p.124).
75. Published in (ibid.), pp.130-164.
76. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.22.
77. Quoted in Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.34.
78. A pun on the name Gagan Singh.
79. A pun on the name Mathbar.
80. A pun on the name Fatya Jang.

the poets of this period, a Rāmaite poet among Kṛṣṇa devotees and patriots, and this fact alone makes him historically noteworthy.[81]

It has not been possible to give details of all of the poets of this "formative" period of Nepali literature. Poetry was very much the dominant genre; the development of a modern Nepali prose style came very much later, although some Nepali scholars are determined to seek out antecendents for the novel and the short story in the early 19th century.[82] The poetry which has been described in the preceding pages demonstrates the trends which predominated in Nepali literature prior to the production of its first major work, the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta, in the mid-19th century, and Table 18 summarises the literature of the period. The translations of the Sanskrit classics are illustrative of a departure from literary tradition on the part of the pandits who attempted them, but the formality of their language demonstrates the continued conservatism of the literary culture. The substantial borrowings which were made from other north Indian vernacular literatures are also indicative of the total lack of Nepali religious literature prior to the late 18th century. Literary Nepali did become considerably more colloquial in the poetry of such writers as Yadunāth Pokharyāl, and this period also saw the beginnings of a tradition of śṛṅgār poetry, no doubt the result of the Hindi rīti kāvya school,[83] which had already become extremely popular in India. The Rām bhakti tradition of poetry was also initiated by Raghunāth, and was soon to equal the Kṛṣṇa bhakti school with the advent of Bhānubhakta Ācārya, the "founder poet" of Nepali literature.

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81. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.34.
82. The Tīn Āhānaharū by "Munśī", which were published in Ayton's A Grammar of the Nepalese Language, in 1820, are often said to be the first Nepali short stories. (Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.49.) These are published in Pokharel (op.cit., 1974), pp.298-299.
83. The Rīti Kāl of Hindi poetry is generally dated 1650-1850 A.D. and its most famous poet was Bihārī Lāl (1603-1663) of the court of Jai Singh at Jaipur. (Dwivedi, op.cit., 1966, pp.99-134.).

TABLE 19: Early Nepali Texts, Prior to the 19th Century: Summary

Date	Title	Author
c.1401	Bhāsvati (Nepali translation)	Anon.
1592	Untitled poem.	Anon.
1601	Svasthānīvratakathā (Ritual text)	Anon.
1606	Rām Śāhako Jīvanī. (Biography of Rām Shāh)	Anon.
c.1650	Bājaparikṣā (On the treatment of hunting falcons.)	Anon.
1716	Jvarotpatti Cikitsā (The treatment of fevers.)	Vāṇivilās Jyotirvind
1723	Prāyaścit Pradīp. (Didactic prose.)	Premanidhi Pant
c.1744	Pṛthvīnārāyaṇako Jīvanī. (Biography of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ)	Anon.
c.1750	Auṣadha Rasāyan. (Medicinal treatise)	Davālāl Śāha
1752	Ajīrṇamanjarī (Medicinal treatise)	Gangāviṣṇu Dvija
1764	Ajīrṇamanjarī (Medicinal treatise)	Līlambara
1774 (?)	Divya Upadeśa	Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Śāha
1776	Hitopadeśa Mitralābha	Bhānudatta
1791	Auṣadhi Grantha (Medicinal treatise)	Harṣa Ācārya
1794	Lakṣmī Dharma Samvād (Religious poetry)	Rāmabhadra Regmī
1798	Hāsyakadamba (Drama)	Śaktivallabh Arjyāl

Nepali Poets of the Early 19th Century

Name	Works
Indiras (b.1827)	Gopikāstuti
Gumānī Pant (1790-1846)	
Vidyāraṇyakeśarī Arjyāl (1806-55)	Yugalagīta, Draupadistuti.
Daivajñākeśarī Arjyāl	Aśvaśubhaśubhaparīkṣa, Gorakṣayogaśāstra.
Vīraśālī Pant	Vimalabodhānubhava.
Vasant Śarmā (1803-90)	Kṛṣṇacaritra, Samudralaharī.
Yadunāth Pokharyāl (b.1808)	Stutipadya, Śrīkṛṣṇacaritra.
Hīnavyākaraṇī Vidyāpati	Gītagovinda, Gītavānī, Sāta Rāga, Sāta Nāyika (comp. c.1830-40)
Patanjalī Gajuryāl (1823-87)	Matsyendranāthako Kathā, Haribhaktamālā, Gopāla Vāṇī, Tīrthāvalī.

Name	Works
Raghunāth Pokharyāl (c.1811-63)	Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakaṇḍa.
Vijayānand	Mahābhārata (prose translation) (comp. c.1829)
Lalita Tripurāsundarī (d.1831)	Rājadharma
Bhavānīdatta Pāṇḍe (b.1801)	Mudrārākṣasa, Ātmabodha, Mahābhārata, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Hitopadeśa
Yogī Amvaragīra (d.1833)	Gītagovinda (prose translation), Brahmayajña--vedānta, Yogavāśiṣṭasāra, etc.
Sundarānand Bāṇḍā	Triratna-saundarya-gāthā (c.1832)
Vaiyākaraṇ Nepāl	Rāmāyaṇa Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa

Chapter 13

Bhānubhakta Ācārya (1814-1868): The 'Founder Poet'

The rôle of Bhānubhakta in the evolution of modern literary Nepali is of great importance and his poems, primarily the Rāmāyaṇa epic, are fundamental to the emergence of the national literature. Accordingly, he is greatly honoured by most Nepali writers, and regarded as the Ādi Kavi, the "Founder Poet" of Nepali literature. Obviously, he was by no means the first poet of the language, but he was, quite indisputably, the first of a stature comparable to that of other great figures of North Indian vernacular literatures. Tulsī and Sūr are highly regarded as the most important poets of the formative bhakti kāl of Hindi literature; they left an extensive body of poetry to posterity, and although much of it had been composed in dialect verse, their contribution to the emergence of a prestigious literary tradition in the Hindi language is justifiably regarded as being of the utmost importance. Similarly, Bhānubhakta, who composed the first epic poem in Nepali, is regarded as the initiator of the Nepali poetic tradition of the 19th century.

Abhi Subedi, one of the few Nepalese critics to write in English on Nepali literature, notes that Bhānubhakta was the "first good Nepali poet....whose aesthetic and poetic sensibility was more mature".[1] Dharaṇīdhara Koirālā was more forthright in his praise, likening Bhānubhakta to Chaucer.[2] Since the early 20th century, most Nepalese

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1. Abhi Subedi: Nepali Literature. Background and History, Kathmandu, 1978, p.33.
2. dhanya kavi timī cāsar hāmrā: "Blessed poet, you are our Chaucer". Quoted by Indrabahādur Rāī: "Pārasamaṇijyū: sandarbh dārjīlinmā nepālī bhāṣāko mānakīkaraṇ". Bhāratīya Nepālī Vāṇmay, vol.1, no.1, Darjeeling, 1980, p.76.

intellectuals have had at least a superficial knowledge of English literature and they are often tempted to draw such parallels between their great poets and those of other traditions. To compare Bhānubhakta to Chaucer, or even to Tulsī, or Sūr, is as misleading as comparing Suvānand Dās to Shakespeare, not because of any notions of superiority or inferiority, but because cultural and literary contexts are necessarily distinct. Each poet should be assessed on his own merits in terms of his own native tradition and culture.

The poetic works of Bhānubhakta have been the subject of more commentary and analysis than those of any other Nepali poet of the 19th century. Some literary historians have even named a literary era for him: the Bhānubhakta Yuga. A few others, perhaps for the sake of argument alone, seek to cast aspersions upon his hallowed status by comparing his early poems unfavourably with those of his near-contemporaries.[3] Despite this muted dissent, the title of Nepali Ādi Kavi is his alone and is accorded to him by the vast majority of Nepali writers. Outside Nepal, he has become something of a figure-head for nationalists among Nepalese communities in India, Sikkim and Bhutan; Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Gangtok each possess a bust of the poet, and his birthday is celebrated every year by Nepali residents of those towns.[4]

Bhānubhakta's most important achievement was his composition (or partial translation) of the first mahākāvya or epic poem of Nepali literature, based in the main on the Sanskrit Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. The Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta, often simply referred to as the Nepālī Rāmāyaṇa, is generally regarded as the first work to have given the spoken Nepali language a literary expression. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, the Mahākavi of the modern era, called Bhānubhakta "The Greatest Man

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3. Tānāsarmā (Bhānubhaktadekhi Tesro Āyāmsamma, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1979, p.4) states, "It is unscientific to specify that anyone is the ādi kavi; it closes the door to further research" and Keśavaprasād Upādhyāya (Prāthamik Kālīn Kavi ra Kāvya Pravṛtti, Kathmandu, 1975, p.234) quotes similar views from Dīnanāth Upādhyāya and Rāmakṛṣṇa Śarmā, two other Nepali literary critics.
4. R.K.Sprigg: personal communication, 1983.

in the History of Nepali Literature" and wrote,

> "When Bhānubhakta decided to write the Rāmāyaṇa, the Nepali language existed only upon the lips of the Nepalese people. It possessed no definite form or aim and its grammar lay in the womb, as yet unborn. Conceited pandits turned up their noses in contempt at the very mention of the vernacular (bhāṣā), and to them the term "Nepali literature" seemed a mockery. At that time there was no way in which any sentiments other than those of the Purāṇas could be fostered in the hearts of the people."[5]

Of course, this was something of an exaggeration, as has already been demonstrated, for the works of Bhānubhakta had been preceded by those of several other Nepali poets of repute. It is true, however, that an accepted literary norm had not yet been established; Nepali in its written form remained quite heavily influenced by other languages, and especially by Sanskrit, and no consensus existed among even the smallest number of poets as to what kind of written Nepali was to be preferred. Although Bhānubhakta's verse was not yet free of borrowings from other languages, such as Urdu, and general "Hindustani" influences, it appears that the poet was quite conscious in his efforts to employ vocabulary and idioms which were conspicuously Nepali. This is most clearly discernible in his Rāmāyaṇa. Those who represent Bhānubhakta as a jan kavi, a folk poet, argue that his language is so imbued with nepālīpan ("Nepali-ness") that it is comprehensible even to the illiterate when read aloud, and they attribute great popularity to his Rāmāyaṇa among the common people of Nepal. It is extremely difficult to assess the truth of such assertions, but there is no doubt that the name of Bhānubhakta is more familiar to the illiterate hillsman than that of any of his more recent successors.[6] Whether or not his avowed aim was

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5. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Lakṣmīnibandhasaṅgraha, Kathmandu, 1945, p.32.
6. Personal enquiries in the hills of Nepal during 1981-82 revealed that some villagers had heard the names of Bhānubhakta and his Rāmāyaṇa, but it was only the young who had attended schools who could offer any further information.

indeed to translate the life of Rāma into the common tongue for the sake of the Nepalese populace, it remains true that the language of the Rāmāyaṇa was a more accurate reflection of the spoken form of his mother-tongue than that of earlier poetry. Bhānubhakta was neither a court pandit, nor a member of a literary élite, and so he might have been less susceptible to the influence of Sanskrit and more familiar with the rural form of the spoken language.

Most of the details of Bhānubhakta's life can be gleaned from the biography by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa, Kavi Bhānubhaktācāryyako Jīvan Caritra, which was first published in 1891.[7] There are a great number of secondary works, which all draw heavily on this brief account.[8] In the original biography, and increasingly in its transmission, the life of the poet has taken on the aspect of a legend; he has become the kāvya-puruṣa, an embodiment of poetry, and a figure invested with deeply nationalistic connotations.[9] There is also some doubt concerning the authenticity of some of the poems in the original biography, and the historical truth of some of the events it describes. There are occasional complaints at the near-canonisation of the poet; Keśavarāja Upādhyāya, for instance, argues that his life was an "example of middle-class wealth and commerce, not the life of a saint or a devotee".[10] This view might be borne out by the fact that much of Bhānubhakta's Rāmāyaṇa was written during a period of "enforced residence" at Kumārī Chowk in Kathmandu. The traditional eulogising biography seems to infer that he was obliged to work there under the supervision of his superior, because of some discrepancies in his accounts; he held some kind of official post in the Tarai; but other commentators, and his own poems of the time, suggest that he was indeed imprisoned there.[11]

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7. The edition which has been consulted for this study was edited by Indrabahādur Rāī and published in Darjeeling (Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan) in 1964.
8. Examples are Naranāth Ācārya: Kavi Samrāṭ Bhānubhakta Ācārya ko Saccā Jīvanacaritra (1960), which virtually deifies the poet, and Bālacandra Śarmā: Bhānubhakta (1957), which adopts a more objective approach.
9. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.283.
10. Ibid., p.239.
11. The various stories of Bhānubhakta's imprisonment are summarised by Paras Mani Pradhan: Adi Kavi Bhanubhakta Acharya, Kalimpong, 1979, pp.15-20.

At the very least, he had discharged his duties as the son of a civil officer in a manner that was deemed unsatisfactory.

Paras Mani Pradhan, who based his English-language study of Bhānubhakta on Motīrām's Jīvan Caritra, states that the poet had learned much of the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa from his grandfather, and that he was familiar with the philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya, the great 9th-century proponent of Hindu monism.[12] Upādhyāya adds that he "even thought in verse"[13] and it would seem that he was indeed something of an habitual poet; the earliest poems attributed to him date from c.1826 when he was no more than fourteen years old.[14] The young Bhānubhakta recieved a typical Brahmanical education, including a spell in Banaras, and thus he must have become familiar with the classics of Sanskrit literature.

The tale of the ghāṃsī, or grasscutter, is an important chapter of the Bhānubhakta "legend". It was first related in Motīrām's biography and Gumānsingh Cāmling casts doubt upon its authenticity, suggesting that it might have been of a later origin.[15] In the biography, a song tells how a chance encounter with a grasscutter inspired Bhānubhakta to embark upon the composition of the Rāmāyaṇa:

bharjanma ghāṃsa tira mandii dhan kamāyo
nāma kyai rahos pachi bhanera kuvā khanāyo
ghāṃsī daridri gharako tara buddhi kasto
mo bhānubhakta dhani bhaikana āja yasto
mero indāra na ta sattala pāṭi kyai chan
je dhan ra cīja harū chan ghara bhitranai chan
tes ghāṃsi le kasari āja diyecha artī
dhikkāra ho! makana basnu na rākhi kīrtī[16]

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12. Ibid., pp.7-8.
13. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.240.
14. Bāburām Ācārya: Purānā Kavi ra Kavitā, Kathmandu (3rd edn), 1978, p.87.
15. Gumānsingh Cāmling: Maulo, Darjeeling, 1978, pp.140-168.
16. Bhaṭṭa, op.cit., 1964, pp.8-9.

"With his mind set upon (the cutting of) grass all his
life, he has become wealthy,
And he has pondered upon what his name will mean to
posterity, and dug a well,
The grasscutter comes from a poor home, but such
wisdom is his!
I, Bhānubhakta, am wealthy, but here I am today,
And what public wells or resthouses have I?
The wealth, the possessions which are mine are
secreted within my house.
That grasscutter has taught me such a lesson today!
Accursed be my life without renown or fame!"

The story is almost certainly apocryphal, and the authorship of the poem is disputed. It incorporates several "old" linguistic features, such as the use of mo in place of ma in line 4, and the substitution of the post-position -kana for modern lāī in line 8.[17] These could well have been added by Motīrām for the sake of authenticity, and so they prove nothing concerning the origin of the poem.

The establishment of a chronology for Bhānubhakta's compositions is complicated by the piecemeal fashion in which he composed the Rāmāyaṇa, and by the many shorter "occasional" poems he also wrote. It seems, however, that his first two works of translation were his Praśnottari and the Bālakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, of which the latter was later revised.

The Praśnottari or "Answers to Questions" is clearly a translation of the Maṇiratnamālā of Śaṅkarācārya. Bhānubhakta himself stated: praśnottarai ho maṇiratnamālā or, "the Praśnottari is the Ratnamālā".[18] Each verse of four lines begins with a rhetorical question on dharma, such as;

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17. Some Nepali scholars argue that mo is not an authentically archaic spelling of ma, as it does not appear in earlier texts.
18. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.79.

kun jñāna cha ṭhūlo bhani līnu parnyā?
"Which is the great knowledge for which one must strive?"

or, kun kāma ho mana dii garnu parnyā?
"Which is the work that should be performed attentively?"

These enquiries are followed by a reply,

vedāntako jñāna cha dukha harnyā
"The knowledge of Vedanta, which dispels suffering."

śrīviṣṇu bhakti cha dukha harnyā
"Devotion to Viṣṇu which dispels suffering."[19]

The Praśnottari was indeed a direct translation from the Sanskrit original as is evident from a comparison of the original first verse, Bhānubhakta's Nepali translation, and a rendering into English;

apārasaṃsārasamudramadhye
sammujjato me śaraṇaṃ kimasti
guro kṛpālo kṛpayā badatad
viśveśapādāmbujadīrghanaukā

apāra saṃsāra samudramahāṃ
ḍubyāṃ śaraṇ kun cha malāi yāhāṃ
cāṃdo kṛpāle ahile batāū
śrīkṛṣṇako pāu cha mukhya nāu[20]

"Into the limitless ocean of the world
I have sunk; what refuge is there for me here,
Kindly tell me now!
The feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa will serve as a boat (to help you across)"

The forty-eight verses of Praśnottari represent a workmanlike translation, a śabdānuvāda (word-translation) rather than a bhāvānuvāda

19. Bhānubhakta Ācārya: Bhānubhakta-Granthāvalī (edited by Paras Mani Pradhan), Darjeeling, 1952, pp.224-226.
20. Quoted in Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.29.

(mood-translation) with little alteration in the emphasis or philosophy of the original, and few additions. Its language is extremely simplistic and essentially repetitive, and the vocabulary is very similar to that of devotional Hindi verse, as both languages take most of their religious and philosophical terms from a common, Sanskrit source. (e.g. saṃsāra, "the sensual world", mukti, "liberation", vairāgya, "renunciation", svarga, "paradise", tṛṣṇā, "thirst" or "desire", mokṣa, "salvation", ahiṃsā, "non-violence", etc.) The purely religious and moralistic content of Praśnottari tends to preclude the use of words which could be regarded as exclusively Nepali in origin.

Although a poet of the bhakti-mārga, Bhānubhakta was less ascetic than his precursor in the Avadhi language, Tulsī Dās, and he composed a number of "occasional poems". Under detention in the Kumārī Chowk, he penned this sarcastic plea to the commander-in-chief;

roj roj darśana pāuṃchu caraṇako tāp chaina manmā kachū
rāt bhar nāc pani herchu kharca nagarī ṭhūlā cainmā ma chu
lāmkhuṭṭe upiyāṃ uḍūsa saṅgi chan yinkai lahaḍmā basī
lāmkhuṭṭeharū gāuṃchan ti upiyāṃ nācchan ma herchu basī[21]

"Each day I can pay my respects to you and my mind is at ease,
All night I can watch the dancing, too, at no expense, great is my joy,
Mosquitoes, fleas and bugs are my companions, and I live among them,
The mosquitoes sing, the fleas they dance, and I sit and watch."

Bhānubhakta began his version of the Rāmāyaṇa in the late 1830s and he had completed his first draft of the first canto, the Bālakāṇḍa, by 1841. It is evident that the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa was the text upon which he based his translation, but his rendering is in part śabdānuvāda, in part bhāvanuvāda, resulting in a more concise narrative. Much of the

21. Bhaṭṭa, op.cit., 1964, p.16.

philosophical commentary of the original is dispensed with, and the Nepālī Rāmāyaṇa lacks the lengthy passages with which Tulsī Dās attempted to establish a sectarian supremacy in his Rāmacaritamānasa. Although begun prior to 1840, the Rāmāyaṇa was not completed until shortly before the poet's death in 1868, and much of it is purported to have been written during his detention in 1852.[22] There is no doubt that sections of the epic were directly translated from the original, as can be demonstrated by a comparison of the first line of the Bālakāṇḍa of each text:

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa	ekadā nārado yogī paranugrahākāṅkṣayā paryaṭan vividhal lokan satyalokamupāgamat
Nepālī Rāmāyaṇa	ek din nārada satyalok pugi gayā lokko garūm hit bhanī[23]

("One day, Nārada arrived in Paradise, with the intention of doing good for the world.")

Pradhan relates the story of Bhānubhakta's composition of the last canto of the Rāmāyaṇa on his deathbed. His son, Rāmanāth, was required to read the original Sanskrit and the poet dictated his translation.[24] While one doubts the literal truth of such stories, there is much evidence in the Bhānubhakta "legend" and in the Rāmāyaṇa itself which supports the view of a direct translation from the Sanskrit which occupied the greater part of the poet's life.

Bhānubhakta, however, seems to have been eager to dispense with much of the content of the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa which he regarded superfluous. Several passages of the original are therefore merely summarised in the translation. Lines 223-224 of the Bālakāṇḍa which describe the birth of Rāma summarise an account of the event in the Adhyātma which

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22. The same dates for the composition of the Rāmāyaṇa are given by Bāburām Ācārya (op.cit., 1978, pp.88-91) and Pradhan (op.cit., 1979, p.8, p.82).
23. All quotations from the Rāmāyaṇa are from Bhānubhakta ko Rāmāyaṇa edited by Sūryya Vikram Jñavālī, Calcutta, 1932.
24. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.82.

amounts to six lines. Likewise, the first four lines of the same canto,

> ek din nārada satya lok pugi gayā lokko garūṃ hit bhanī
> brahmā tāhiṃ thiyā paryā caraṇamā khūsī garāyā panī
> kyā sodhchau timī sodha bhanchu ma bhanī marjī bhayethyo jasai
> brahmāko karuṇā bujhera ṛṣile bintī garyā yo tasai[25]

> "One day Nārada arrived in Paradise with the intention of doing good for the world.
> Brahmā was there, and he fell at his feet with joy,
> "What do you ask of me; ask it, I say", Brahmā was thus kindly disposed;
> And understanding the compassion of Brahmā, the saint made this entreaty."

amount to a summary of eleven lines in the original Sanskrit.[26] In all such cases, Bhānubhakta merely discarded details of the seasons, auspicious portents and the like which he considered to add little to the narrative.

Conversely, he expands certain other passages beyond the scope of the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. In the Sundarakāṇḍa, the description of Laṅkā which extends to four lines of verse in the original is expanded to three verses, 15-17, of four lines each in Bhānubhakta's translation.[27]

It is for this composition of a "Nepali" Rāmāyaṇa that Bhānubhakta is most respected. Proponents of the "purist" jharrovād school of modern Nepali, who favour the encouragement of indigenous vocabulary in preference to borrowings from Sanskrit, are lavish in their praise of his language. The view that they uphold of Bhānubhakta's use of truly "indigenous" vocabulary and idiom is one that is quite justifiable, Earlier translations into Nepali from Sanskrit were mostly literal śabdānuvāda, and those which were attempts at bhāvānuvāda have been adjuged largely unsuccessful, due to the Sanskritised nature of the

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25. Rāmāyaṇa Bālakāṇḍa, verse 1.
26. Bālacandra Śarmā, op.cit., 1957, pp.47-48.
27. Ibid., pp.49-50.

literary Nepali they employed. Thus it is greatly to his credit that Bhānubhakta succeeded not only in his translation of a major Sanskrit epic into the vernacular, but also in transposing the whole story into a recognisably Nepalese idiom. In the Bālakāṇḍa, the description of Rāma's wedding includes much detail which is overtly Nepalese in nature;

sundar lagna khaṭan garyā janakale maṅgal saharmā calyā
nāc kīrtan sitakā prakāś kana hunyā rātmā cirāk khup balyā
jo maṇḍap cha vivāhako tasa upar jhumkā hirākā jhulyā
mūṅgā-moti juhār janakapuramahāṃ ghar ghar sabaikā jhulyā[28]

"King Janaka ascertained the beautiful auspiciousness of the moment and entered the auspicious city,
Together with dancing and the singing of devotional songs, torches illumined the night,
Diamond pendants dangling from the top of the marriage-canopy
And coral, pearls and jewels from each and every house in Janakpur."

Such practices are still common in Nepalese royal weddings.[29]

In the Sundarakāṇḍa canto, a warning is called to Rāvaṇa of the advent of Hanumān;

ailhe he maharāj! adhīka baliyo āyo ra bānar yahāṃ[30]

"Oh, king! A monkey of great strength has come here today!"

The word-order employed in this line, and the use of the words ra and he serve to communicate a sense of surprise suited to the drama of the incident. Bhānubhakta is given great credit for his supposed "Nepalisation" of the characters of the epic, and this is most effective in his colloquial translations of the words they utter. Bhānubhakta also used many non-Sanskrit, indigenous words for objects which further emphasise the distinctly Nepalese idiom of his translation. For instance,

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28. Rāmāyaṇa Bālakaṇḍa, verse 111.
29. Bālacandra Śarmā, op.cit., 1957, pp.57-58.
30. Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakāṇḍa, verse 90, line 1.

Rāvaṇa instructs that Sītā be served a meal whilst he is holding her in captivity;

> tarkārī bhuṭuvā banāunu asal mīṭhā masālā dharī[31]
> "Cook vegetables and fried meat, adding tasty spices of quality."

Thus Rāvaṇa, the demon king of Laṅkā, intends to serve Sītā a typically Nepalese meal.

Rāma is referred to in the third person as hajur, from the Persian hazur, or as khvāmit, which is a term of respect used for a superior army officer in Nepal. His actions are denoted by the high 'royal' honorific verb baksanu, thus he is accorded a royal status as Raghunātha. Many adverbs peculiar to the Nepali language are in evidence, such as ghusrukka marnu,[32] "to drop down dead", or jhaṭpaṭa, "immediately", and several fine examples of the alliterative onomatopoeia which is still used skillfully by modern Nepali poets;

> vari pari tahiṃ tiraimā panī vṛkṣa phal phul
> bhari cha jāuna vanamā gardachan pakṣile gul
> bhramaraharu latākā phūlamā halli halli
> ghununu ghununu gardai hiṇḍdachan valli vallī[33]
>
> "Over there the trees surround, full of flowers and fruit,
> And the birds do their utmost to get into the glade,
> On the flowers of the vines, bees move to and fro
> And humming and buzzing they go about their business."

Despite the high degree of nepālīpan discernible in the Rāmāyaṇa, substantial borrowings have still been made from other Indian languages. Words of Persian origin such as hajur, and hukum, "command", occur extensively throughout the poem, contributing greatly to the vocabulary referring to the attributes and actions of royalty. Military terms from the same sources also appear, such as phauj, ("force", "a troop of

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31. Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakāṇḍa, verse 43, line 4.
32. Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakāṇḍa, verse 15, line 2.
33. Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakāṇḍa, verse 16.

soldiers", from English through Persian and Urdu), laskār, which has the same meaning, and so on. Other words taken from Persian, Arabic, and Urdu sources include khillat, "honour", mālik, "master", matlab, "meaning", marjī, "desire" or "inclination", and khabar, "news".[34] There is also evidence of the influence of kharī bolī Hindi. Rāmacandrakā pāsmā alternates with raghunāthajyukā hajurmā, the Braj Hindi word kachu appears as an alternative to kehi or kyāhī ("some", "a few"), and sāmne to agāḍi ("before", "in front of").[35]

The Sundarakāṇḍa is regarded as the "best" canto of the whole epic, both for its language and for the concise nature of its narrative. Most of the apparent borrowings from other languages were probably mere reflections of the spoken language of the time, and the use of Sanskrit vocabulary is minimal, limited to those philosophical terms for which there are no Nepali equivalents. Accordingly, the few passages of the Nepali Rāmāyaṇa which are concerned with philosophical discourse are perforce more Sanskritised, while simple narratives and dialogues provide more scope for colloquialism. It is in these latter passages that those qualities are most evident for which the poetry of Bhānubhakta is so highly praised.

Bhānubhakta was the author of two shorter, but still quite major, poetic works besides Praśnottari, the Rāmāyaṇa, and a number of short poems. The first is entitled Vadhūśikṣā, the "Education of Wives", which is addressed to a friend at whose home Bhānubhakta once spent the night; his night's rest was disturbed by a quarrel between the women of the house;

> ek thok bhanchu na mānnu dukkha manamā he mitra tārāpatī
> timrā ī jati chan jahāna harū tā laṛnyā rahyā chan atī
> sunyāṃ danta bajhāna āja ghara ko karkargaryā ko usai
> bharrāt jāgrana jhaiṃ bhayo makanatā lāgena āṅkhā kasai
> dhan ijjat ra kamāi dekhchu baṛhiyā chainan kunai cīja kamī

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34. The influence of Urdu on Nepali vocabulary is examined by Panjulāl Gurung: "Hāmro Bhāṣāmā Urduko Chāp", Mādal, vol5 (Shillong), June, 1979.
35. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.303.

buhārī yadi karkaśā huna gayā kyā ghargaraulā timī
sāhrai jhoka uṭhyo malāi ra badhūśikṣā banāyāṃ panī
yasle patni buhāri chori haru ko tālim garaulā bhanī[36]

"One thing I tell you, but be not saddened oh friend Tārāpatī,
These wives and women of yours are utterly quarrelsome,
Today I heard the clashing of their teeth, a constant squabbling in the house,
All night I was awake, my eyes would not close at all,
I see that your wealth, honour and income are in good order, and that you want for nothing,
But if your daughter-in-law has become shrewish, how can you run the home?
I was greatly annoyed and so I wrote this "Education of Wives"
So that you could educate your wife, your daughter-in-law and your daughters."

His advice continues for the rest of the poem and reflects his conservative Brahmanical morality. In verse five, he prescribes the way in which a wife should demonstrate her devotion to her husband;

svāmīkā caraṇāravindayugako jal bhaktile pān garun
nirmal deha garāunākana u jal kehī śarīrmā charun[37]

"With devotion, she should drink the water from the lotus feet of her Lord,
And sprinkle a little of it over her body, which she will have made spotless."

The poem is purely didactic in content and so the verses are composed in clear, simple Nepali, presumably in order that the reader will understand its instructions.

Bhānubhakta's last major composition was his Bhaktamālā which he wrote late in his life. It is purely devotional in tone, representing the

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36. Quoted by Bhaṭṭa, op.cit., 1964, p.19.
37. Bāburām Ācārya, op.cit., 1978, p.101.

poet's personal supplication to his god, and his advice to others to follow his example. Although it was an original composition, it was influenced by the Carpaṭapanjarī of Śaṅkarācārya, as is evident from the following śloka;

Carpaṭapanjarī punarapi rajanī punarapi divasaḥ punarapi pakṣa
punarapi māsaḥ
punarapyayana punarapi varṣa tadapi na muñcatyāśāmarṣam

Bhaktamālā ghaḍī din pakṣai māsa ṛtu ayana yai kāla gatile
ghaṭ yo āyu mero viṣaya aba khojdaicha matile[38]

"Thus time passed into hours, days, months and seasons,
My lifetime shortens but even now my mind seeks sensual pleasures."

Thus Bhānubhakta lamented the passing of time and his wasting of it, and urged bhakti to the Lord as the only means of salvation. Few Nepali scholars would agree with the poet's assessment of his life. His contributions of a Rāmāyaṇa in the national language and of nepālīpan to the emerging literary medium ensured him of a high place in the history of Nepali literature, and of becoming a focus of nationalist aspiration in the 20th century.

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38. Upādhyāya, op.cit., 1975, p.285.

Chapter 14

Motīrām Bhaṭṭa (1866-1897)

Motīrām Bhaṭṭa was one of the most important and influential figures in the development of Nepali prose and poetry, and in the early study of its literary history. Yet he is often mis-represented as being merely an organiser and biographer, and his own literary gifts are frequently under-rated.

As the son of a Brahman pandit, Motīrām was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. Accordingly, he was sent to Banaras in the company of his mother in 1871; there he began his education in Sanskrit and Persian.[1] In 1880, at the age of fourteen, he returned to his birthplace, Kathmandu, to marry, but stayed less than a year, returning to Banaras in 1881, where he was enrolled in an English school.[2] Thus, Motīrām was exposed to a great variety of linguistic and literary influences during his youth. Although imbued in the Sanskrit tradition of Brahman scholasticism, he was unusually familiar with Persian, Urdu, Hindi and English and was probably the first Nepali poet to receive any "western-style" education.[3]

Motīrām's first claim to fame stems from his editorship and publication of the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta, and his authorship of the biography of the same poet. Tānāsarmā complains that this is often regarded as his only literary achievement;

> "As soon as Motīrām Bhaṭṭa is mentioned, we say - it was he who presented Bhānubhakta to the people. Although it is known that his plays, poems and ghazals are included in the

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1. Abhi Subedi: Nepali Literature. Background and History, Kathmandu, 1978, p.37.
2. Ibid., p.37.
3. Tānāsarmā: Bhānubhaktadekhi Tesro Āyāmasamma, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1979, p.12.

M.A. syllabus, he is still generally regarded simply as the person who sought out Bhānubhakta."[4]

An apocryphal story relates that Motīrām first took an interest in Bhānubhakta when he heard the Rāmāyaṇa being sung at his own wedding.[5] It seems that he subsequently returned to Banaras with renewed nationalist fervour. It is quite possible that Motīrām, who is now cast by Nepali scholars in the rôle of an early patriot, was indeed eager to enhance the status of Nepali literature. Thus he sought out and promoted the works of a 19th century Brahman poet who wrote in the vernacular language of his country. The efforts of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa resulted in the publication of the Rāmāyaṇa in 1887 and of his biography of Bhānubhakta, Kavi Bhānubhaktācāryyako Jīvan Caritra, in 1891.[6]

Motīrām's activities in Banaras in the 1880s and 1890s were probably due in part to the influence of Hindi literatteurs such as Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850-1885). The first burst of modern Hindi literary activity took place in Banaras in the 1870s and 1880s, and was largely centred on the dynamic personality of Hariścandra, who championed the kharī bolī school of "common speech" Hindi, and contributed much to the development of Hindi as a standardised literary language. The Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, the oldest organisation for the promotion of Hindi language and literature, was founded in Banaras in 1893.[7] Such activity in Banaras literary circles must have made their impression upon the young Motīrām; the Nepali language lacked any recognised institution and little was being done to promote its development. Unable to identify fully with the cause of Hindi, although no doubt sympathetic towards it, Motīrām turned to his own mother-tongue and began to emulate the activity of the Hindi enthusiasts.

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4. Ibid., pp.11-12.
5. Śāntadeva Bhaṭṭarāi: Nepālī Sāhityako Utthān Kāl (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Tribhuvan University, 1967).
6. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.37.
7. A brief history of this institution is given by Karine Schomer in: "Mahadevi Varma's Allahabad: An Exploration of the Modern Hindi Literary Community", Berkeley Working Papers on South and Southeast Asia, vol.1, Berkeley, 1975, pp.204-205.

The precise nature of the rôle played by Bhaṭṭa in his editing and publication of the poetry of Bhānubhakta has become mildly controversial among Nepali scholars. There is no doubt that the first published editions of the Rāmāyaṇa were edited by Motīrām, but there remains some suspicion that he may have revised their content in some way. Tānāsarmā attempts to dispel these suspicions by stating that an inspection of the Rāmāyaṇa manuscripts reveals that the epic was without doubt the work of the poet to whom it is attributed, although he allows that it was subject to substantial editing by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa.[8] The many published editions of the Rāmāyaṇa, through editing, differ slightly from one another and also from these manuscripts. Motīrām's biography of Bhānubhakta, Kavi Bhānubhaktācāryyako Jīvan Caritra, is best described as a "biographical novel". It is a brief prose composition, punctuated by poems which are attributed to Bhānubhakta; the 1964 edition amounts to thirty pages.[9]

The authorship of the several short poems included in the Jīvan Caritra is more seriously debated. Bālacandra Śarmā makes the observation that the prose style of the biography bears the stamp of Hariścandra and that the language of the poems is by no means historically accurate.[10] In the ghāṃsī poem, the expression mo bhānubhakta is an anomaly which was never used in any other poem ascribed to Bhānubhakta, and is quite likely to have been coined by Motīrām.[11] Tānāsarmā expands on this, illustrating his argument with the following description of Kathmandu, which is also attributed to Bhānubhakta;[12]

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8. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1979, p.13.
9. Edited by Indrabahādur Rāī and published by the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, Darjeeling, 1964.
10. Bālacandra Śarmā: "Bhānubhakta ra unko Yuga", in Kṛṣṇacandrasingh Pradhān (ed.): Sājhā Samālocanā, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, pp.57-58.
11. Ibid., p.58.
12. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1979, p.15.

kahiṃ bhoṭa ra landana cīna sarī
kahiṃ kāl bhari galli cha dilli sarī
lakhanau paṭanā madarāsa sarī[13]

"In places, it resembles Tibet, or London, or China,
Elsewhere there are time-filled alleys, like Delhi,
Like Lucknow, Patna or Madras."

These are not comparisons which one would expect from a rather rustic Brahman in the mid-19th century; they are more likely to have been written by the more urbane Motīrām Bhaṭṭa in 1890. If Motīrām was indeed the author of any of these poems, some of which are now quite highly-regarded, the fact that he omitted to claim credit for their composition would indicate his eagerness to further the popularity and prestige of Bhānubhakta.

The Jīvan Caritra represents one of the first examples of Nepali literary research and criticism. The following excerpt is illustrative of the author's critical attitude and developed prose style;

kabi dui prakāra kā hunchan. pailhā svābhāvik athavā sahaja kabi, dosrā saṃsargī arthāt kṛtrim kabi. svābhāvik kabikā barābara kṛtrim kabi kadāpi huna sakdaina sahaja kabi kā kabitā kā barābara saṃsargī kabitā kailhyai panī hunna. sahaja kabitā mā artha ra śabdako alaṅkāra sarāsara dekhincha jo sahaja kabi cha usle kabitā gardā lekhna hune na hune kurā ko kyai bicāra rākhdaina arthāt kasaiko tarīph garī lekhnu paryo bhane guṇa doṣa barābara lekhī dincha u kasai ko parvāha māndaina yasto kabitā gare jyān jālā bhanne bhaya katti manamā māndaina.[14]

"Poets are of two varieties. The first is the natural or spontaneous poet, the second the contrived or artificial poet. The artificial poet, perhaps, cannot be the equal of the natural poet, contrived poetry can never compare with the

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13. This is an extract from the Jīvan Caritra, Rāī (ed.), op.cit., 1964, p.13.
14. Rāī (ed.), op.cit., 1964, p.24.

poetry of the spontaneous poet. In spontaneous poetry, the rhetoric of meaning and word is immediately evident. As he composes his poetry, the spontaneous poet pays no attention to matters of acceptability. That is, if he has to describe someone, he writes it all down, paying equal attention to their virtues and to their faults, with no thought for anyone else. He does not even care if the poem costs him his life."

Motīrām was deeply involved in the publication of Nepali books. In Banaras, he was well acquainted with Rām Kṛṣṇa Varmā, with whom he collaborated on the production of a number of Nepali books at the Bhārat Jīvan Press. It is not clear whether he was actually financially committed to the press, but he succeeded in publishing the Rāmāyaṇa in 1887, the Jīvan Caritra in 1891, and several of his own poems in the intervening years. His longer poems, such as Uṣācaritra, Kamala-Bhramar-Samvād and Pīkadūt, adopt traditional śṛṅgār themes of love and mild eroticism. Although Bhaṭṭa is now more famous for his songs, Pīkadūt, which was included in the influential Sūkti Sindhu collection of 1917,[15] is still quite popular. A poem of thirty verses, it treats a traditional theme of the separation of lovers with conventional Sanskrit allegories couched in colloquial Nepali verse.[16]

In the early 1890s, Motīrām returned to Kathmandu, possibly at the behest of the rājaguru of the day, Lokarāja, who thought that he could accomplish more in his homeland.[17] There he continued to work on his poetry, and became involved in another publishing company, the Motīkṛṣṇa Company. He also gathered a number of poets around himself to form a semi-formal society which became known as the Kavi Maṇḍalī, or "poets' circle". During his residence in Banaras, a similar group of poets had gathered together, their chief preoccupation being with the

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15. Śyāmajīprasād Aryāl and Kamal Dīkṣit (ed.): Sūkti Sindhu, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1967.
16. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.62.
17. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.37.

composition of samasyā-purtī poems.[18] These were pedantic riddles, derived from an older Sanskrit tradition;[19] their solutions were contained within the poem and were often the name of the poet who had composed them.

The nature of Rana courtly life was the main reason for the existence of the Kavi Maṇḍalī. Court patronage remained the most lucrative resort for impecunious Nepali poets, as poetry and music were popular among the aristocracy. The Rana prime ministers encouraged music at court, and invited musicians and singers from India to entertain them. The period of Bir Shamsher's office (1885-1901) has become known as a "golden age" for Nepali music.[20] The influence of Urdu poets from India, and the Rana taste for poetry of the śṛṅgār rasa dictated the tone and content of much of the Maṇḍalī poetry. The Urdu ghazal and the ever-popular ṭhumarī metre were also adopted by many Nepali poets of this period. According to Mādhavaprasād Ghimire, Motīrām's most important contribution to Nepali poetry was the quality of songfulness (gītimayatā).[21] The ghazal had long been popular in Banarasi Urdu circles, and Motīrām had become well-versed in the principles of Urdu and Persian poetry and Indian music. Thus he and the members of his Maṇḍalī strove to adapt these genres to their language and were to some extent successful. A few of these songs remain quite popular, especially those which were included in a published compilation entitled Saṅgīta Candrodaya.[22] Contributors included Motirām Bhaṭṭa, Lakṣmīdatta Pant, Gopināth Lohanī and Śambhuprasād Ḍhungyāl.

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18. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.63.
19. The composition of samasyā-purtī poems has been described as a "contemporary panditic relaxation". Edwin Gerow: Indian Poetics, (A History of Indian Literature, vol.53), Wiesbaden, 1977, p.220.
20. Dayārām Śreṣṭha Sambhava: Nepālī Sāhityakā Kehī Pṛṣṭha, Kathmandu, 1975, pp.41-43.
21. Mādhavaprasād Ghimire, personal communication, Kathmandu 1981. Ghimire is a noted Nepali poet of the "Romantic" school, and a member of the Royal Nepal Academy.
22. Motīrām Bhaṭṭa: Saṅgīta Candrodaya, Banaras, 1927.

Some of the vocabulary of these Nepali ghazals reflects the influence of the Urdu language. iska (Persian ishq) replaces prem, "love", and other words such as hukum (Arabic hukm), "command", mijāja (mizāj), "disposition", and gajab (Arabic ghazab), "wonder" occur regularly. Other than this borrowed vocabulary, the language is still an ordinary kind of Nepali. The Maṇḍalī poets all adopted the Urdu convention of including their name or nom-de-plume in the final verse of their poems. The metres of these ghazals generally imitate the most popular Urdu metres such as hazaj and kāmil. Lakṣmīdatta Pant's ghazal, with its reiteration of the radif "ki u jānos ki maiṃ jānūṃ", "whether he knows or I know", is reminiscent of Momin's famous Urdu ghazal which has the radif "tumhaiṃ yād ho ki na yād ho, "whether or not you remember".[23]

The following verse is taken from a ghazal by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa:

dinako pacāsa ta ke hajāra paṭak katī samjhāunū
ma garibakā gharamā hare, timile yasari naāunū
risamā bhayau ki khuśi thiyau, ma ta kehī jāndina ke thiyau
ki yaso thiyau ki uso thiyau, manamā kasori būjhāunū
na ta ā bhanū, na ta jā bhanū ma yaso bhanū ki uso bhanū
tiniko mijāja ma ke bhanū, katisamma binti caḍhāunū[24]

"How many times each day must I remind you; fifty times, or a thousand,
Here am I in this house of poverty, and you do not come oh Lord,
Were you angry or were you pleased; I know not what it was,
Were you like this, or were you like that, how should I explain it to myself?
Should I neither say "come" nor "go", should I say this or should I say that?
What can I say of your disposition, and how long should I continue my entreaty?"

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23. David Matthews, personal communication, London 1982.
24. Madhupark kavitā 2038, Kathmandu, 1981, pp.117-118.

The rhyme schemes generally follow those of the Urdu ghazal, but are somewhat unsophisticated and often merely repetitive. Themes are usually of unrequited love, sometimes with religious overtones, but there is little evidence of the subtle Islamic mysticism in which the Urdu ghazal is often imbued. The ghazal is no longer especially popular among Nepali poets, although it forms the basis for many of the popular songs transmitted by Radio Nepal. Perhaps it is too tainted by its Indian or Urdu origins for those who seek nepālīpan.

In 1895 Motīrām left Kathmandu once more, to study for the F.A. examination in Calcutta, but contracted a virulent fever there and returned to Nepal to die in 1896 at the age of 31.[25] He had achieved much in a tragically short lifetime; besides the introduction of Bhānubhakta to Nepali-speaking people, he had also initiated the introduction of publishing to Nepal which is the subject of the following chapter of this study, and was therefore one of the country's earliest literary commercialists. Apart from his experiments with samasyā-purtī and ghazal poetry, he has several published works to his credit including poetry, drama and biography.

Lakṣmīdatta Pant wrote this tribute to Motīrām;

motīrāma bhanī kavi suhṛda hun yo mitrako maṇḍalī
śobhā pāirahancha candra jasarī rākhera tārāvalī[26]

"Motīrām is the pure-hearted poet in this circle of friends,
The moon receives beauty when placed among the constellations."

Despite the minor controversies which surround him, Motīrām is accorded a place among the founding fathers of Nepali literature. To regard him merely as Bhānubhakta's biographer or, as Tānāsarmā might put it, as playing Marlow to Bhānubhakta's Shakespeare,[27] would be a grave injustice.

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25. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.38.
26. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.60.
27. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1979, p.13.

Chapter 15

Early Nepali Publishing

If the literature of a modern national language is to become rich and "developed", it must be produced in a commercial, published form and in sufficient quantities for a readership of some size to be built up. Although the population of Nepal is still predominantly illiterate,[1] there now exists a readership which is large enough to justify first editions of most books which amount to some 1000 copies. The small industry which is involved in the publication of Nepali books has emerged only in the last 100 years.

The development of printing in Nepal postdated the genesis of the Hindi and Bengali press by more than 50 years.[2] Unlike Tibet, where religious literature had been produced in some quantity through the system of block-printing,[3] the only precedent for the printed book in Nepal was the handwritten manuscript. These were copied out laboriously by scribes and the process was inevitably very slow, and vulnerable to copying errors. Modern published editions of older Nepali texts often vary due to the differences which exist between the various manuscripts which have surivived.[4] Before the advent of printing to

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1. In 1971, only 14.32% of the population of Nepal were reported to be literate. Nepal, Dept. of Statistics: The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal, Kathmandu, 1977. Table 5.2, p.127.
2. A Bengali version of the New Testament was published in 1800. T.W.Clark in: Clark (ed.): The Novel in India, University of California, 1970, p.24.
3. "...numerous Bhotiya books of inferior pretensions, are to be obtained at Katmandu from the poor traffickers and monks who annually visit Nepal on account of religion and trade.... Printing is, no doubt, the main cause of this great diffusion of books. ...the hordes of religionists with which that country (Tibet) swarms, have been driven by the tedium vitae, to these admirable uses of their time." B.H.Hodgson: Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, London 1874, pp.9-10.
4. When copying out a text, a scribe might well have been tempted to (contd. on next page....)

Nepal, it was also impossible for any literary composition to reach more than a few readers, and so the Nepali literary world was confined to the courts of the rulers of the country and to the high-caste pandits. The standardisation of the written language could not proceed very far, either, until writers had ready access to each other's works, nor could they work in anything other than a state of near-isolation. The development of a publishing and printing industry in Nepal was therefore of prime significance for the development of the Nepali language and its literature.

The Printing Press in Nepal

The first printing presses in Nepal were all hand-operated machines, as electricity did not begin to penetrate everyday life until the early 20th century.[5] Their operation was still quite a slow process, but it was nevertheless a great improvement on the traditional methods of manuscript duplication. The first electric press to be installed in Nepal was set up in 1912.[6]

The very first printing press to operate in Nepal is said to have been brought by Jang Bahadur Rana when he returned from his tour of Europe in 1851.[7] This cannot be fully substantiated, but the fact that several writers on this subject relate the same story indicate that it is

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(.....contd. from previous page)
correct archaic features of its language which he perceived to be errors. That differences between the recensions of various manuscripts carry over into the published versions is clear from a comparison of the older texts reproduced by Ishwar Baral in his Sayapatrī (Birāṭnagar, 1969) with the same texts in Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel's Pānc Say Varṣa (Kathmandu, 1974).

5. Chandra Shamsher made electricity available for public use in Kathmandu in 1917. Kamal P. Malla: The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu, 1979, p.187. Other Nepalese towns, such as Jumla, have only recently been connected to the national grid. Rising Nepal, 19th April, 1983.
6. Grīṣmabahādur Devkoṭā: Nepālko Chāpākhānā ra Patra-Patrikāko Itihās, Kathmandu, 1967, p.26.
7. Ibid., p.19.

held to be true in Nepal.[8] The first printed products appeared some time before 1887, issued by the Ṭāip Chāpākhānā ("Type Printing House"), a Government press situated in Thāpāthalī, Kathmandu; they were mostly tickets, envelopes and stamps.[9] This Chāpākhānā might have used the press which Jang Bahadur is supposed to have brought in 1851, for the Ṭāip Chāpākhānā later changed its name to Giddhe Press ("Vulture Press").[10]

The second Nepalese printing-house was the Manoranjan Chāpākhānā, which was operative by 1862 in Thaṃhiṭi, Kathmandu.[11] A book by one Kṛṣṇa Girī, entitled Mokṣa Siddhi, was printed there in 1862.[12] Its cover-page bore a list of three other books which had been published or were to be published by the same press.[13] The first printed edition of the Muluki Ain, the legal code which had been promulgated by Jang Bahadur in 1854, was also produced by the Manoranjan Chāpākhānā in 1870.[14]

Several other handpresses were also set up during the 1870s, usually in the homes of members of the Rana family. Shamsher J.B. Rana, for instance, is said to have installed a press in his house in Nārāyaṇahiṭi.[15] In 1892 another Government press, the Jangī Lithography Chāpākhānā, was set up in Basantpur, Kathmandu and two more were imported from India in 1905/6 with the avowed aim of "remedying the shortage of books in the Nepali language".[16]

Several Nepalese constructed their own rather rudimentary hand-presses, although this was not encouraged by the Government. The first of these was made by Kubera Ratna Vajrācārya in Kathmandu in 1892, and it produced Buddhist literature in Sanskrit and Newari. Although it

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8. This "Vulture Press" was made in Britain, and is said to bear the mark of its manufacturers, V. & J. Fizzins and Co. Malla, op.cit., 1979, p.186.
9. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.20.
10. Ibid., p.20.
11. Ibid., p.20.
12. Ibid., p.20.
13. Ibid., p.20.
14. Ibid., p.21.
15. Ibid., p.22.
16. Ibid., p.23.

changed hands several times, this "Buddha Press" was operational until 1922.[17] It is also said that the Nārāyaṇ Press which was given by Gehendra Shamsher J.B. Rana to the Paśupat Press in 1901 was made locally.[18]

The first privately-owned press to operate commercially in Nepal was the Paśupat Press of the pandit Motīkṛṣṇa Dhīrendra, which was established in 1893.[19] Most of the other presses were owned by the Ranas and their associates, such as the rājaguru Hemarāja, who set up his Ḍhokā Ṭola Press in 1899.[20]

The advent of this small publishing industry towards the end of the 19th century facilitated the publication of Nepali literature for the very first time. The market for the products of these presses was then severely limited by financial constraints and widespread illiteracy, and so the production of printed books was a venture which could not be expected to yield any profits; only the rich ruling class and the Government could afford to incur the financial losses which were involved. A few books were produced from 1862 onwards, although the only publication of any lasting importance from this early period was the Muluki Ain of 1870.[21]

The publication of some kind of periodical journal was less risky as a financial venture, however; an unprofitable journal could be discontinued or published less frequently before the financial losses incurred by its proprietors became insupportable. Since its beginnings, the history of the Nepali periodical has been characterised by the frequent appearance of new journals and their swift disappearance shortly after their initial publication. Few periodical publications have managed to appear regularly over a long period. The survival of many of those that have continued publication for longer than a few

17. Ibid., p.23.
18. Ibid., p.24.
19. Ibid., p.24.
20. Ibid., p.25.
21. Ibid., p.21.

months has often depended upon Government subsidy.

The Gorkhāpatra

The oldest surviving Nepali periodical is the Gorkhāpatra, a Government-owned newspaper which began as a weekly publication on the 3rd day of Jyeṣṭha in the year 1958 of the Vikram era (May 1901), with an initial circulation of 1000 copies. For the first year of its life it was printed at the Ṭāip Chāpākhānā's Paśupat Press in Thaṃhiṭi, Kathmandu, but it was subsequently moved to the newly-inaugurated Gorkhāpatra Chāpākhānā in Naksāl, Kathmandu, where it remained until 1949. In 1950, when the Gorkhāpatra Corporation was established, it was moved to its present headquarters in Juddha Saṛak ("New Road") in Kathmandu. The first electric press to be used in the printing of the newspaper was installed in these premises in 1950.[22] The Gorkhāpatra was published weekly from 1901 to 1943, twice weekly from 1943 to 1946 and has been a daily newspaper since 1960.[23]

The Gorkhāpatra was established in 1901 when the Prime Minister, Deva Shamsher, entrusted Naradeva Motīkṛṣṇa Śarmā (also referred to as Naradeva Pāṇḍe) with the task of editing and producing the first newspaper of Nepal.[24] From 1901 to 1950, the Gorkhāpatra was controlled by members of the ruling Rana family and so its content was a clear manifestation of the "political culture"[25] of their regime. It is credited with having made some contribution to the development of Nepali prose, nevertheless: novels and stories were serialised from 1903, in order to boost the paper's circulation.[26] The originality of most of these stories was dubious and their authors were usually anonymous, as was the editor of the day. The stories included numerous translations from Hindi, Bengali, French, English and even a purported Japanese source.[27] Short literary articles were also published on occasion:

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22. Ibid., p.57.
23. Ibid., pp.578-644 (Appendix 2).
24. This man is said to have been an uncle of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.80.
25. Lok Raj Baral: "The Press in Nepal", Contributions to Nepalese Studies, vol.2, no.1 (February, 1975), p.19.
26. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.89.
27. "Pratyāgaman: ek jāpānī kissā ("The Return: A Japanese Tale"), 1910, ibid., p.90.

examples were Mātṛbhāṣāko Unnati, "The Progress of the Mothertongue" (1908), Baladeva Kaviko Bayān, "The Story of the Poet Baladeva" (1916) and a brief criticism of a play, Durgābhaktataraṅginī (1916).[28]

In accordance with its central status in the Nepalese media, the content of the Gorkhāpatra has always been dominated by uncritical coverage of the pronouncements and political activities of the ruling élite, the notices and announcements issued by Government departments, advertisements of vacancies in the state bureaucracy and so on. In keeping with the official nature of its content, the Gorkhāpatra employs an extremely formal style of language; Gorkhāpatra journalese is therefore consistently grandiloquent. Although it now covers world affairs in its reporting and remains the most comprehensive and widely-read of the many Nepali newspapers, it seems that the success of the Gorkhāpatra is due more to its status as a Government mouthpiece in which prestigious vacancies are advertised than to the comprehensiveness of its coverage of world news.

The issue of the 30th day of Jyeṣṭha in the year 2028 of the Vikram era (June 1971) exhibits features which typify the nationalist and monarchist attitudes of its editors and which illustrate the technical character of its prose style. This particular issue was a Viśeṣāṅk, a "special edition" marking the 52nd birthday of the late king Mahendra.[29] Thus all the articles it contained were concerned with aspects of the king's life, his political philosophy, the poems he had written, etc. These were punctuated by advertisements placed by most of the major companies of Nepal, which offered congratulations to the king. The texts of these notices were all virtually identical, wishing the king dirghāyu, "a long life".

The Gorkhāpatra makes great use of newly-devised technical terms which employ vocabulary culled from Sanskrit. The following titles of three articles from this issue of the Gorkhāpatra illustrate the kind of technical language which is used:

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28. Ibid., p.90.
29. Gorkhāpatra Śubharājajanmotsava Viśeṣāṅk (Jyeṣṭha 30, 2028) (1971).

Śrī 5 Mahārājādhirāja Mahendra ra Asaṇlagna Pararāṣṭra Nīti.

"King Mahendra and the Principle of Non-Aligned Foreign Policy."

Nepālko Ārthik Vyavasthā evaṃ Vikāsko Kehī Ādhārabhūt Vṛndāharū

"Some Basic Problems of the Economic Condition and Development of Nepal."

Śrī 5 Mahendrako Netṛtvamā Audyogik ra Vāṇijya Vikās.

"Industrial and Commercial Development under the Leadership of King Mahendra."

An unwillingness to use colloquial vocabulary complements this technical jargon; the Sanskrit words evaṃ or tathā are preferred to the more common Nepali word for "and", which is ra. The texts of Gorkhāpatra articles also employ a heavily 'Sanskritised' form of Nepali; some extracts follow:

yasarī sudṛḍha prem bandhanmā bāndhiī praṇayalīlā suru gardai tadātmyamā āekā tī cakravāk-dampati jastā nāyaka-nāyikā madhye nāyikālāi niṣṭhur daivale ek din cvātta cuḍera laijāncha.[30]

"Thus the hero and heroine are like a pair of amorous geese who begin to achieve oneness in the firm bonds of true love as they commence the game of love, when one day cruel Fate suddenly snatches the heroine and bears her away."

yasarī varttamān viśvako pariprekṣyamā hāmro mulukako gatilāi yathārthasaṅga viśvako pherindo pariveśamā niṣkantak praveśa garāune ra āphno vāstavik sthiti prāpt garna kaṭhin saṅgharṣa gareko yas satābdiko

30. From a critical appraisal of King Mahendra's poem Usaiko Lāgi, by Mādhavaprasād Devkoṭā, ibid, p.9.

sarvādhik mahattvapūrṇa bhumikā hāmile āphno rājābāṭa pāyauṃ.[31]

"Thus it is from our king that we have received the most important introduction to this century, during which we have undergone a difficult struggle to attain our true position and, in a global perspective, to allow the pace of our country to get in step with reality and to enter without obstruction into the changeable world environment."

Like Hindi, Nepali has adopted its technical vocabulary from Sanskrit, but the excessive grandiloquence of the language of the Gorkhāpatra is not wholly due to any inherent inadequacy of the Nepali language which might render it incapable of communicating matters of academic gravity. Attempts have been made from time to time to colloquialise the language of the Gorkhāpatra, but with limited success. Until such efforts meet with success, the Gorkhāpatra will remain practically incomprehensible to all but the educated élite,[32] despite the evidence for its widespread popularity which was given in an article entitled Gorkhāpatra Jindābād, "Long Live the Gorkhāpatra":

"It is the Gorkhāpatra which, in this Nepal which is so far behind in the strides of Progress, arrives at the very doors of the poor inhabitants in every corner of the mountains, at a price of only 4 rupees per year.... Because the printing and distribution is not good, and nor is the postal service, only 5000 copies are published; even so, it is estimated that at least one lākh (100,000) people read it....."[33]

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31. From an article by Kṛṣṇa Koirālā, ibid., p.31.
32. "It is unfortunate that the kind of pedantic Nepali used in the news broadcasts over Radio Nepal and in the Government newspaper, Gorkhapatra, which has the widest circulation of all newspapers in Nepal, is not understood by a great majority of the population." Rishikesh Shaha: Nepali Politics, Retrospect and Prospect, O.U.P., 1975, p.9.
33. This was attributed to "Ek Garīb Pahārīya", "A Poor Hillsman" and published in: Gorkhāpatra 24th Baisākh V.S. 2016 (7th May, 1959).

Early Nepali Periodicals of Nepal

Śudhāsāgar

The first Nepali periodical published in Nepal is said to have been the Śudhāsāgar.[34] No copies of this journal are extant, and so the evidence for its brief existence has been gleaned from the few other publications which were contemporary with it. A book entitled Nālopākhyān, which was published in 1899, bore the following message (in Nepali) on its cover-page:

> "It is a matter of great pleasure to us to note that a monthly paper in our Gorkhā language, entitled Śudhāsāgar, commenced publication in the month of Śrāvan in the year 1955.... Our noble Gorkhālī gentlemen will surely look upon it with favour, for the sake of the progress of their country and language."[35]

Śudhāsāgar thus seems to have been a monthly publication of stories and poems which began to appear in July/August 1898; it was probably very short-lived.

The Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti: Promotion and Censorship

With his appointment of Naradeva Motīkṛṣṇa as the first editor of the Gorkhāpatra in 1901, Deva Shamsher had laid the foundations for a tradition of formal journalism in Nepal. The same Prime Minister had also begun to establish elementary schools and to invite his subjects to submit proposals for further social reforms. This liberalism soon aroused the ire of his more conservative contemporaries, however, and he was forced to relinquish his position after only four months in office.[36]

Deva Shamsher's successor was Chandra Shamsher, who was to retain the post of Prime Minister until his death in 1932. Although Chandra

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34. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.29.
35. Ibid., p.29.
36. Leo E. Rose and Bhuwan L. Joshi: Democratic Innovations in Nepal, Berkeley, 1966, p.47.

reversed many of Deva Shamsher's reforms, he was responsible for the establishment of the first literary and publishing institution of Nepal, the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti, "The Committee for the Publication of the Gorkha Language". Funded by the Government, the Samiti was inaugurated in 1913.[37] Its primary function was to promote the publication of books in the vernacular, as its name suggests, but it was also invested with an additional rôle of censorship of all published materials. As well as promoting and endorsing new publications, it also controlled and even prohibited them. This function of the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti is described by rule no.31 of the Ain, the legal code which was current at the time:

> "If anyone wishes to print or publish a book on any subject, he should first bring it to the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti for inspection. It should not be published until it has been stamped (with the mark of the Samiti's approval). It is wrong to publish a book without first acquiring this stamp. If the book is deemed suitable, the Samiti might publish it itself. If so, the book should bear the names of the Office and of the officer in charge. If a book is published without the approval of the Samiti, its publisher will be fined 50 rupees. If its contents are improper (anucit), the books will be seized, punishment will be proclaimed by the Council and meted out according to their decision. There will be no plaintiff at such a trial, but the Government will play the part of plaintiff and a thorough investigation will be conducted."[38]

This law is probably a fair indication of the attitude of Chandra Shamsher's Government to the publication of Nepali literature. Before establishing the Samiti, he is reputed to have declared;

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37. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.53.
38. Harṣanāth Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī: "Nepālī Bhāṣāko Kānūnī Pṛṣṭhabhūmi", Nepālī, vol.73 (Lalitpur, Autumn 1976), p.30.

> "There aren't even any books in Nepali! Just reading Kṛṣṇacaritra and Rāmāyaṇa is not enough! I intend to set up an office which will organise the writing of Nepali books."[39]

It seems unlikely that this move was prompted by any kind of altruistic devotion to the literature of the Prime Minister's mother-tongue. When Trichandra College was inaugurated in 1918, it represented a response to the growing numbers of Nepalese who were seeking an education abroad. Similarly, the encouragement of Nepali literature in Nepal gave the Government some control over the content of this literature. It is very difficult to ascertain which element of policy, promotion or censorship, was uppermost in the minds of the administrators of the Samiti.[40] The rules of censorship were certainly utilised on a number of occasions. The most notorious instance occurred in 1920: a poet, Kṛṣṇalāl Adhikārī, was jailed for nine years for the following paragraph from the introduction to his book Makaiko Khetī, "The Cultivation of Maize":

> "....dogs of foreign breed were being pampered in Nepal while native dogs were the only useful animals as far as protection against thieves was concerned."[41]

In 1930, too, several young intellectuals, including the poet Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, were fined 100 rupees each for proposing that the authorities should open a public library.[42] Thus there was little chance of any major social change under Chandra Shamsher, and the development of Nepali literary activity was severely retarded; no new periodical publications appeared in Nepal between 1901 and 1934. Deprived of a forum for publication in Nepal, writers were obliged to resort to India.

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39. Rāmacandra Ḍhuṅgānā: "Nepālī Bhāṣāko Mādhyam", Nepālī, vol.52, (Lalitpur, 1972), p.29.
40. Tānāsarmā (op.cit., 1970, p.53) emphasises the censorial function of the Samiti, but Abhi Subedi merely refers to it as "the first publishing centre of Nepali literature". (Nepali Literature. Background and History, Kathmandu, 1978, p.46.)
41. Rose and Joshi, op.cit., 1966, p.53.
42. Ibid., p.53.

The most important linguistic, literary and political developments of this period took place in Banaras and Darjeeling, although there was some activity in Kathmandu:

> "Being in Kathmandu and under the vigilant supervision of the Rana government, they (critics of the Ranas) had to conduct their political activities circumspectly, in contrast to the Nepali expatriates at Banaras. The Kathmandu group sought to awaken consciousness mainly through their writings."[43]

The retarding effect of the Rana Governments' policies upon the growth of Nepali periodicals is clarified by the following table.[44]

TABLE 20: Expansion of Publishing Industry in Nepal (Periodicals) 1898-1957

Year	Dailies	Weeklies	Fortnightlies	Monthlies	Others	Total
1898				1		1
1901		1				1
1938				1		1
1946					1	1
1950	1	3		1		5
1952		4	2	7	9	22
1957	14	7	5	8	5	39

The practice of registering all periodical publications was introduced by Juddha Shamsher's government in Chaitra 1994 (March/April 1937) and continues today. Śāradā was registered as 001, the Gorkhāpatra 002, and so on.[45] Registration was not required for the publications of Government departments, but for all other journals it was compulsory. It seems that the authorities felt the need to monitor new periodicals, but they eschewed the more obtrusive forms of censorship which had been favoured by Chandra Shamsher. After the political changes of 1950/51, the new Government continued to require the registration of new journals.

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43. Ibid., p.53.
44. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, pp.42-43.
45. Ibid., p.136.

That this registration could be used as a kind of covert censorship is evident from the withdrawal by the Government of registration from at least 21 publications prior to 1967.[46] Conversely, the introduction of this new legislation did create an atmosphere of greater freedom for writers and publishers in Nepal.

Śāradā

With the limited liberalisation of the Rana Government which followed from the appointment of Juddha Shamsher in 1932 came the first purely literary journal of modern Nepal. Śāradā commenced publication in Phālgun V.S. 1991 (February/March 1934).[47] Supported by a Government subsidy, it was published each month for the next ten years and became the main forum within Nepal for the publication of "early modern" literature. Because of the financial support they had extended to Śāradā, members of the Rana family figured prominently in features carried by the journal; there were special issues (viśeṣāṅk) to mark their births, marriages and so on and in memoriam of former rulers. Despite this, the editor of Śāradā, Ṛddhibahādur Malla, seems to have been a man of some integrity who worked in the shadow of his autocratic rulers to produce a journal in which Rana portraits and eulogies were accompanied by literary compositions of quality.[48]

Works by many of the writers who are now regarded as the founding fathers of modern Nepali literature were published in Śāradā. These included essays and plays by Bālakṛṣṇa Sama, poems and essays by Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, short stories by Guruprasād Mainālī and Viśveśvaraprasād Koirālā and poems by Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl. The book-reviews and critical essays which Śāradā published were of equal importance; to some extent, the isolation of the Nepali writer had at last been ameliorated.

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46. Ibid., pp.578-644 (Appendix 2).
47. Ibid., pp.31-32.
48. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, pp.132-134.

Other Journals

The month of Bhadra, V.S. 1992 (August/September 1935) saw the appearance of the second Nepali journal to receive a Government subsidy. Udyog published articles loosely connected with topics of industry, and lasted for 14 rather undistinguished years in the face of public disinterest. In its final issue, the editor complained,

> "This journal, Udyog, was the first example of the Mahārājā's willingness to bestow upon the people the schemes of inventiveness which are contained within it. Unfortunately for the country, the public are indifferent to it and are completely unconcerned by its disappearance."[49]

Juddha Shamsher was succeeded by Padma Shamsher in 1946, and the Nepali Bhāṣā Pariṣad was founded in the same year, with the avowed aim of more fully implementing the more positive aspects of the policy of the old Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti. In Baisākh V.S. 2004 (April/May 1947), the monthly journal of this institution, Sāhitya Srota, began publication. Although it lasted for only 30 months, Sāhitya Srota managed to publish much literature of quality, which often bore political undertones.[50] The editor, Hṛdayacandrasingh Pradhān, was a noted poet and essayist and Sāhitya Srota was regarded as the second Nepali journal of great literary importance to emanate from Kathmandu.[51]

Two other literary journals of some minor importance appeared in Nepal before 1950: Aṅkhā, a monthly edited by Devīprasād Rimāl, lasted for 7 years from 1948 and the monthly Puruṣārtha lasted for 4 years from 1949. Government departments also began to produce their own periodicals such as Nepāl Śikṣā (1948), Śikṣā (1947) and Gharelu Ilam Patrikā (1947). The first provincial periodical, a monthly called Sevā, was published in Birganj in 1948.[52]

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49. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.32.
50. Ibid., p.33.
51. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.134.
52. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, pp.33-34.

Table 21 lists the periodicals published in Nepal prior to 1950.

TABLE 21: Nepali Periodicals Published in Nepal Prior to 1950

Śudhāsāgar	1898?	monthly
Gorkhāpatra	1901-43	weekly
	1943-46	twice weekly
	1946-60	thrice weekly
	1960-	daily
Śāradā	1934-44	monthly
Udyog	1935-37	fortnightly
	1938-52	monthly
Sāhitya Srota	1947-49	monthly
Gharelu Ilam Patrikā	1947-48	fortnightly
	1948-52	monthly
Kathmandu Municipal Patrikā	1947	fortnightly
	1949-?	quarterly
Aṅkhā	1948-50?	monthly
Nepāl Śikṣā	1948-52	monthly
	1952-56	bi-monthly
Puruṣārtha	1949-53	monthly

It is clear that the years which followed the end of the rule of Chandra Shamsher were substantially more favourable to the development of the Nepali press than those which had preceded them; Śāradā and Sāhitya Srota were certainly milestones in this process. Prior to the mid-1930s, however, the most significant and rapid progress in this field was made by expatriate Nepalese in India, to whom we now turn our attention.

Early Nepali Periodicals in India

The production of periodicals in the Nepali language may well have begun in India before the publication of Śudhāsāgar in Nepal proper. The fact that Nepali literature fared better in "exile" than in its homeland during the first 30 or 40 years of this century is at least partially explicable in terms of the conservative nature of Rana rule in Nepal. Nepalese had been emigrating to India for a variety of reasons since the early 19th century, as we have seen: some were landless

labourers, others came for education and a third group were the mercenary soldiers known as "Gurkhas". Thus the numbers of Nepalese abroad swelled rapidly during the 19th and early 20th centuries: in 1900 the Indian Census recorded just under a quarter of a million people of declared Nepalese origin.[53] Their concentration in localities such as Darjeeling, Banaras and Dehra Dun led to a heightened sense of ethnic and cultural identity. Thus it was in India that a political form of Nepalese nationalism first evolved: education made the emigrant more aware of the relatively "backward" state of his homeland, and the soldier who returned from the First World War in Europe was more sensitive to the political realities at home.[54]

The growth of nationalist sentiment was first manifested in the renewed and increasingly widespread vocalisation of loyalty to the Nepali language: bhāṣā-prem and bhāṣā-sudhār (love of language and language reform) became causes which were to inspire a whole generation of Nepali writers. They found a literary expression in the efforts which were exerted by many Nepalese to improve the quality of their language and to produce a body of literature which would afford it a status comparable to that of the other literary languages of northern India, such as Hindi and Bengali.

It was probably Motīrām Bhaṭṭa who began this tradition of Indian Nepali literature with a monthly journal, the Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan. There are no copies of this journal extant, and so the evidence for its publication has again been gleaned from contemporary sources.[55] A Hindi periodical, the Bhārat Jīvan, was current in Banaras in the 1880s; in 1886 this journal carried an advertisement which announced the forthcoming publication of the Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan. It was also mentioned by the author of an early Nepali book, Gorkhā Hāsya Manjarī, published in Banaras in 1895.[56] If the Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan was ever printed, it

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53. By the 1930s, one Nepalese-born person in twenty was living in India. Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon: Nepal in Crisis, Oxford, 1980, p.37.
54. Only about one third of the 11,000 "Gurkhas" discharged from the British and Indian armies after the First World War opted to return to Nepal. Ibid., p.37.
55. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, pp.96-97.
56. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.43.

was the earliest Nepali periodical, pre-dating Śudhāsāgar by some 12 years.

Although Banaras could be said to have been the literary centre for Indian Nepalese for the first three decades of this century, Darjeeling produced its first Nepali periodical in 1901. The Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat, a monthly paper which continued publication for 30 years, was a very different venture from the other periodicals of the time, as its principal aim was to propagate the Christian faith among the Nepalese of the region.[57] Its editor was a vicar, the Rev. Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān, who seems to have paid very little attention to the language of his journal as long as it communicated the required message. This incurred the wrath of the noted grammarian, Paras Mani Pradhan, who later wrote:

> "In just one sentence the same word is spelled in several different ways; the halant is used after some words, but omitted in others where it is essential."[58]

He illustrated his complaint by supplying the following variant spellings of the word pahile, "before", taken from a single issue: pahile, paile, pailī, pailyai, pahilyai. The Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat was regarded with suspicion by most Nepali-speaking Hindus and its parochial and proselytising articles were written in language which was widely criticised for its colloquial "roughness" and grammatical inconsistencies. Its long life is surprising in view of the fact that it rarely sold more than 50 copies of each issue.[59]

The first serious literary journals to be published in Banaras were Sundarī (1906) and Mādhavī (1908). Although neither journal survived long into its second year, both of them presented literature of

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57. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.90.
58. Indrabahādur Rāī: "Pārasamaṇijyū: Sandarbha Dārjīliṇmā Nepālī Bhāṣāko Mānakīkaraṇ", Bhāratīya Nepālī Vāṇmaya, vol.1, no.1 (Darjeeling, 1980), p.74.
59. Ibid., p.74.

quality and importance to their small readerships. Sundarī was published by a Rasik Samāj, a kind of cultural society composed mainly of students. Its collections of poetry and prose were edited by Cakrapāṇi Cālise.[60]

Mādhavī, which appeared fourteen months later, played a more important rôle in the field of language reform and standardisation. Its editor was Rām Maṇi Ācārya Dīkṣit, who was to become the first chairman of the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in 1913. He was probably the first Nepali editor to make a conscious decision regarding the form of the written language that he deemed most acceptable, and overtly to edit contributions to his journal so that they conformed to his grammatical principles. In the first editorial of Mādhavī, he wrote:

> "There are no good grammars of the Nepali language, and no good dictionaries, nor have any especially useful books been published. I intend to remedy these inadequacies as far as I am able."[61]

Rām Maṇi espoused a style of Nepali prose that became quite controversial. He made much use of the Hindi conjunction ki to link clauses, and rejected the use of the halant.[62] Although many subsequent editors and grammarians were not to follow his example in this matter, it is to his credit that his editorial policy enlivened a debate over Nepali grammar that was considered by all concerned to be crucial.

Nepali periodicals were usually as short-lived in India as they were to be in Nepal some years later. They catered to an extremely limited market and were unable to secure any financial support from official bodies. Candra was another Banaras monthly which failed to

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60. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.46.
61. Ibid., p.46.
62. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.87.

continue publication beyond its first year; the initial motives of its editors were typical:

> "The Nepali language lags behind, although it has lākhs of speakers."[63]

The reasons for its discontinuation in 1914 were also typical for the time:

> "It is clear from this that our countrymen have yet to develop a love for learning."[64]

Gorkhālī was the first Nepali weekly publication in India. Although it could not maintain circulation beyond the seventh week of its second year (1916), it was very highly regarded by Nepali writers. The editor, Sūryavikram Jñavālī, was a Banaras-born Nepali who was extremely active in Nepali literary circles. The declared aims of Gorkhālī were the provision of educational materials and the reform of caste-divisions amongst the Nepalese communities of India.[65] A great deal of attention was paid to the matter of language reform, reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of a single standardised literary language for the development of Nepali literature. Jñavālī attempted to eradicate what he considered to be the "Hindi elements" of written Nepali: a national literary language, like a nation, must aim for external distinction as well as for internal cohesion; for "purity" as well as standardisation. He set out his objectives in the editorial statement of the first issue of Gorkhālī:

> "At a time when men of all races have applied themselves to the development of their languages, it is most regrettable that it is only our Gorkha brothers who have allowed their language to lag behind. Our language is just as capable of spreading knowledge and wisdom as any other. Yet Calcutta University considers our

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63. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.47.
64. Ibid., p.47.
65. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.91.

language to be weak and affords it no place (in its syllabus). Because there is no prospect of progress for a language which remains oblivious of the notions of Science and Art, we have opened a publishing house, the Himalaya Press in Kāshī, the sacred centre of learning. As a service to our Gorkhali brothers, we have brought out a weekly paper entitled Gorkhālī."[66]

Jñavālī attempted to drum up nationalism with his historical writings[67] and his attitudes were echoed by the urgent and patriotic poems of the Darjeeling poet Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā:

deśa bandhuharū ho! uṭha jāga
lāga unnati biṣe aba lāga
dhou dhou manako aba mailo
phāli deu ḍarako aba thailo[68]

"Oh my countrymen! Up and awaken!
Join in with Progress, join in now,
Wash away the dust from your minds,
Cast away the purse of Fear."

Paras Mani Pradhan is a seasoned campaigner for the Nepali language, who was first concerned with the controversies surrounding the issue of standardisation and later made great efforts to obtain official recognition of Nepali as a major literary language from the Government of India. In 1917, at the age of 20, he edited the monthly journal Candrikā which was published in Kurseong (Nep.: Kharsāṅg), near Darjeeling. The first issue contained an article by Paras Mani in which he reviewed the progress made by Nepali periodicals up to 1917:

"The Gorkha language stems from Sanskrit, the speech of the gods, and we are 52 lākhs of Gorkhas who speak it. Even so, the language is in a most decrepit and worrying condition....

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66. 11th day of 6th month, V.S. 1972 (A.D. 1915). Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, pp.47-48.
67. Such as his Dravya Shāh (1933) and Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh (1935).
68. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.94.

> Although other races refer to our Gorkha language with such insulting names as "the jungly dialect", we Gorkhalis do not raise our voices in protest; it is as if we have taken a vow of silence .... From the many papers and journals that have been appearing, the Gorkhāpatra is still current, although I have heard that the number of its customers is unsatisfactory. From Darjeeling, too, a monthly paper, the Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat, has been published over the last 16 or 17 years, but the language of this Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat seems extremely awkward, for one reason or another. If the editor gentleman had adhered to the rules of one Gorkhā grammar or another, and tried to eradicate the suffering incurred by the writing of articles and news, would that not have made it better and more interesting? It is now two years since that excellent weekly, Gorkhālī, was born in holy Kāshī. In our humble opinion, no other paper or journal to date has so encouraged the Gorkhalis to further the progress of their language."[69]

While this literary activity was growing in Banaras and Darjeeling, Nepali periodicals began to emanate from other Nepalese communities in India. In 1921, Ṭhākur Candan Singh established the Gorkha League in Dehra Dun, an army centre in the Indian Himalaya where "Gurkha" troops were recruited. This was "one reflection of the new social consciousness engendered by foreign travel and exposure among the Gorkha servicemen"[70] who had returned from the war in Europe in 1918. As a political grouping, the League aimed to effect social reforms in Nepal and it was therefore vocal in its criticism of the Rana government. The Gorkha League published two Nepali journals from Dehra Dun: Gorkhā Saṃsār began in 1926 and Taruṇ Gorkhā in 1928. The latter was introduced by an editorial statement which said:

> "The time will come when the number of well-educated Gorkhalis will increase and a sense of social responsibility will develop

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69. The article was entitled Āvaśyaktā, "Necessity", ibid., p.92.
70. Rose and Joshi, op.cit., 1966, p.52.

within our institutions. To this end, free-thinking people will have to spread the word freely for a while. So it is a great pleasure to note that we now have two newspapers instead of one."[71]

The Rana Government, however, "interpreted any proposal for change as a potential threat to its authority"[72] and Chandra Shamsher eventually succeeded in his attempts to silence these journals, although they were produced in India.[73]

As nationalist opposition to the Rana government grew, many of the Nepali periodicals published in India became more overtly political in their content. This was partially due to the fact that an increasing number of educated Nepalese were coming to Banaras and other north Indian cities as self-styled political exiles. The prime example of this kind of journal was Yugavāṇī, published in Banaras from 1948 to 1953. Yet these political developments were by no means detrimental to the progress of Nepali literature. The great strides which were being made in this area were exemplified by the establishment of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan in Darjeeling in 1924. This institution published its own Patrikā from 1932 onwards, and the same journal survives today under the name Diyālo.[74] In fact, with the decline of Banaras as a Nepali literary and political centre after the overthrow of the Ranas in 1950, Darjeeling has become the second most important town[75] in the Himalaya for Nepali writers.

It was noted earlier in this study that more significant developments in Nepali literature, and particularly in its periodicals, occurred in India during the first 30 or 40 years of this century. This was due principally to the existence of a conservative and censorious government in Nepal, which retarded literary development. Once an atmosphere of greater freedom had been established in Nepal, however, the importance

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71. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, pp.50-51.
72. Rose and Joshi, op.cit., 1966, p.52.
73. Chandra probably achieved this by bribing Hem Shamsher, son of Deva Shamsher, who was involved with the Gorkha League. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1967, p.51.
74. Rāmalāl Adhikārī: Nepālī Nibandha Yātrā, Darjeeling, 1975, p.134.
75. This statement assumes that Kathmandu is the centre of the modern Nepali literary world, which few would dispute.

of Indian Nepali literature was somewhat diminished. Since the political changes of 1950/51, communication between the Nepali writers of India and their counterparts in Nepal has decreased in intensity. It was once said that "what Darjeeling thinks today Nepal thinks tomorrow";[76] this is no longer true. To some extent, the literary tradition of Darjeeling has become divorced from that of Nepal proper and has also been eclipsed by developments which have occurred within the kingdom since the Government began its official promotion of Nepali language and literature. That more attention is now paid to the Nepali writers of Nepal has given rise to some resentment among Darjeeling Nepalese;[77] to some extent they are justified in their view that Indian Nepali literature has made at least as great a contribution to the development of a standardised language as the literature of Nepal itself. The development of Nepali periodicals in India is summarised by Table 22

TABLE 22: Nepali Periodicals Published in India Prior to 1950

Gorkhābhārat Jīvan	Banaras	1886?
Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat	Darjeeling	1901-30
Upanyāsataraṅginī	Banaras	1902
Sundarī	Banaras	1906
Mādhavī	Banaras	1908
Gorkhā Sāthī	Calcutta	1912
Candra	Banaras	1914
Gorkhālī	Banaras	1916-17
Candrikā	Kurseong	1917-18
Janmabhūmi	Banaras	1922
Gorkhā Mitra	Calcutta	1924
Rājabhakti	Banaras	1926
Gorkhā Saṃsār	Dehra Dun	1926-29
Taruṇ Gorkhā	Dehra Dun	1928-31
Ādarśa	Kalimpong	1930
Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā	Darjeeling	1932-37
Gorkhālī Ravi	Darjeeling	1933
Nebulā	Kalimpong	1935-36
Gorkhā Sevak	Shillong	1935-39?
Udaya	Banaras	1936
Gauṃ Sudhār Patrikā	Kalimpong	1939
Khojī	Darjeeling	1940
Gorkhā	Kalimpong	1945-55

76. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama, quoted in: Kṛṣṇa Girī and Kumār Pariyār: Dārjīliṅkā Kehī Nepālī Sāhityik Pratibhāharū, Darjeeling, 1977, p.5.
77. Paras Mani Pradhan, personal communications 1981-1983.

Pukār	Kalimpong	1948
Yugavāṇī	Banaras	1948-53
Nepāl Pukār	Calcutta	1948?
Himadri	Kalimpong	1948
Sāthī	Darjeeling	1949
Bhāratī	Darjeeling	1949-58
Hāmro Kathā	Darjeeling	1949
Śikṣā	Darjeeling	1949

The publication of an increasing number of Nepali literary journals and books and the establishment of both private and Government-owned publishing companies encouraged Nepali literature to develop rapidly during the first half of this century. Between 1920 and 1950, a number of noted writers emerged whose works are now regarded to be the classics of modern Nepali literature. The present study will not attempt to name all the important Nepali writers of this period, or to describe every literary work of significance. Instead, the lives of three of the most respected literary figures of 20th-century Nepal will be described and analysed in detail. Most of the important cultural, social and literary changes of this period had some bearing on their lives, and their works typify the kind of literature which predominated at the time. The first poet in this study will be the "Poet Laureate", Lekhnāth Paudyāl.

Chapter 16

Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl (1884-1965)

Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl is honoured as the poet who invested Nepali poetry with a "classical" quality, and a linguistic refinement and stylistic formality which previously it had lacked. His poetry possessed a formal dignity which had only been hinted at in the works of earlier poets such as Motīrām Bhaṭṭa, or in those of contemporaries like Dharaṇīdhara Koirālā. Many of his poems conform to the philosophy of orthodox Vedānta and are criticised by modern poets for their old-fashioned fustiness. A few are essentially original in their inspiration, but the best of Lekhnāth's poems achieve a kind of balance between the conventions of Sanskrit kāvya and the romantic spontaneity which was to be more fully developed by Devkoṭā. Although regarded in some quarters as the first poet of the modern period,[1] Lekhnāth is probably more accurately described as a traditionalist who established a developed form of classical Nepali poetry, from which later poets could make their departures.

Although Paras Mani Pradhan lists a Saṅkṣipta Jīvanī, "A Concise Life-History" in his bibliography of Lekhnāth's writings,[2] this auto-biography has not been published and biographical details are therefore rather difficult to obtain. The events of Lekhnāth's first twenty-five years can only be outlined as follows.[3] He was born to a Brahman family in the west of Nepal (modern Gandaki ancal) in 1884 and received

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1. Ratnadhvaja Jośī: Sāhitya Cintana, Kathmandu, 1975, p.91. Jośī states that noted modern critics such as Ishwar Baral, Rāmakṛṣṇa Śarmā and Churamani Bandhu all share this view.
2. Paras Mani Pradhan: Kavishiromani Lekhanath Paudyal, Kalimpong, 1979, p.77.
3. Biographical details are drawn from Pradhan's study (op.cit., 1979) and from an article by Ḍamaruballabha Pauḍyāl: "Kavi Śiromaṇi Lekhanāth Pauḍyāl", Bhānu (vol.3, no.8), Lekhanāth Viśeṣāṅk (1966), pp.127-131.

his primary education from his father. Fourteen or fifteen years later, he was sent to Kathmandu to study at the Rāni Pokharī Sanskrit Pāṭhśālā, a Sanskrit school, and then to Banaras to continue his higher education. This move to India seems to have been something of a disaster, for his young wife died while he was there, and he was no great academic success. Penniless, he decided to seek out his father's estate in the Nepalese Tarai, but to no avail. Eventually, he took up the post of private tutor to a family in Chapki, but he tired of "family feuds"[4] there, and subsequently spent some time seeking employment in India. In 1909, he returned to Kathmandu, where he was fortunate enough to find employment with the family of Bhim Shamsher, as priest and tutor.

As an educated Brahman, Lekhnāth was highly literate, and well versed in Sanskrit literature. From an early age he adopted the habits of a poet, composing pedantic samasyā-purti[5] verses in Sanskrit, and he turned to his mother-tongue as a literary medium before his twentieth year. His first published poems, entitled Śṛṅgāra Pacīsī and Mānasākarṣini, were included in a collection, Kavitākalpadruma, while he was still a student in the capital, in 1904,[6] and two other poems, Viyogini Vilāpa and Vairāgya Vilāpa, appeared in Sundarī, vol.1, nos. 5 and 8 in 1906.[7]

These and other early poems came to the notice of Rām Maṇi Ācārya Dīkṣit who was then the editor of the literary monthly Mādhavī in Banaras. Rām Maṇi invited Lekhnāth to submit his compositions to him, with the result that several more were published in Mādhavī before its demise in 1909.[8] Lekhnāth's relationship with Rām Maṇi was to pay dividends later on, for he became one of the most influential literary figures of Nepal under the Ranas when he was appointed as the first chairman of the newly-established Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in 1913.

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4. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.9.
5. These Nepali "riddle-poems" had been adopted from an older Sanskrit tradition, and popularised by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa and his contemporaries.
6. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.3.
7. Rām Maṇi Ācārya Dīkṣit: Purāna Samjhanā, Kathmandu, 1972, p.27.
8. Ibid., pp.27-28.

Lekhnāth's first major composition was Varṣā Vicāra, "Contemplation of the Rains", which was later expanded and incorporated in the more famous Ṛtu Vicāra, "Contemplation of the Seasons" (1916). The thirty-seven verses of Varṣā Vicāra were published in Mādhavī in 1909.[9] Rām Maṇi and Lekhnāth were evidently in complete agreement about the kind of written Nepali that should be regarded as standard; Rām Maṇi led the halanta-bahiṣkāra movement, which, as we have seen, opposed the use of the halant. This problem may now seem to be a matter of mere orthographic pedantry, but the two schools of thought were quite bitterly opposed to one another's views on the question. Lekhnāth's advocacy of halant-bahiṣkāra was expressed in the following lines of Varṣā Vicāra:

herī naśakanū pārī parakhāla baḍe baḍe
nepālī kavile khuṭṭā kāṭekā varṇa jhaiṃ laṛe[10]

"The high stone walls were destroyed;
They fell like the letters whose legs had been cut by
a Nepali poet."

A collection of Nepali poems which was published by the Gorkhā Grantha Pracārak Maṇḍalī[11] in Bombay in 1912 under the title Lālitya, "Delicacy"[12] included several of Lekhnāth's poems which had previously appeared in Mādhavī. One of these was Kavi Kavitālāpa, in which it is evident that Lekhnāth had become critical of the erotic śṛṅgāra poetry which was still popular. The poem describes a dialogue between a poet and the personification of Poetry, assumed to represent the Goddess Sarasvatī.

Kavitā-

bhaddā avanatikārī rasiyā jastā kitāba kā bhārī
dina dina baṛhdā dekhī aghora manamā uṭhyo sekhī

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9. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.13.
10. This verse from Varṣā Vicāra was included in Ṛtu Vicāra as verse no.97 of the description of the rainy season. Lekhnāth Paudyāl: Ṛtu Vicāra, Nepal (2nd edn.), 1934, p.51.
11. "Gorkhā Book Propagation Committee."
12. The 1912 Lālitya should not be confused with the two volumes of Lekhnāth's poems which were published with the same title at a later date.

Kavi-

śikṣā vicāraśālī lekhanu mihineta mātra ho khālī
gardacha ko ruci yasamā, chan saba bokre kathā-rasamā[13]

Poetry:

"A great welter of books I saw, of ugly and degrading frivolity,
Day by day they increased and a terrible contempt arose in my mind"

The Poet:

"To write thoughtful education is merely an empty labour,
And who takes any interest in it? All are immersed in worthless stories."

After Rām Maṇi had been appointed to the Samiti, Lekhnāth was offered a post in the institution. The offer was made on the strength of his poem Rāma Rājya Pancāśikā, which had been included in the 1912 Lālitya collection, but was composed specifically for perusal by the Samiti.[14] Lekhnāth declined the offer; as an employee of Bhim Shamsher, he felt unable to "cross the floor" to join Chandra Shamsher's Samiti, as the two Ranas headed rival factions within the clan.[15] Besides, his post was secure and moderately well-remunerated, and he retained it for twenty-five years. His decision does not seem to have had any adverse repercussions, for his links with Rām Maṇi were unaffected. Soon after the appointment of the latter, they collaborated on the production of a series of four literary textbooks for schools, entitled Gorkhā Śikṣā. Seventeen of Lekhnāth's poems were included.[16] He also contributed a condensed translation of the Bhagavad Gītā for inclusion in the Saṅkṣipta Bhārata which the Samiti published in 1918.[17] This

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13. Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl: Lālitya (vol.1), Birāṭnagar (3rd edn.), 1967, pp.46-47.
14. Dīkṣit, op.cit., 1972, p.31.
15. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, pp.8-9.
16. Ibid., p.10.
17. The 5th edition of the Saṅkṣipta Bhārata was published by Sājhā in 1966.

Gītā Sāra, a poem of nearly 400 four-line verses, earned him a stipend of Rs.300.[18]

One of Lekhnāth's most popular poems is a departure from his usual style as it is a satirical allegory, in which he bewails his lot as an employee of Bhim Shamsher. In Pinjarāko Sugā, "The Parrot in the Cage" (1916), it is quite evident that the parrot who has no choice but to make its profound utterances according to the whim of its masters is none other than the poet himself. The following two verses of Pinjarāko Sugā[19] should demonstrate the allegorical device,

(16) śuṣka cha ghāṇṭī bandhana carko, bolnaiparne jharko arko
boli nabole laṭṭhi ujāī, huncha tayārī piṭnalāī

"Dry is my throat and onerous my constraint; to be obliged
to speak is an added irritation,
But should I refuse to utter a word, the stick is brandished,
all ready to beat me."

(20) daiva! diethyau timile eka, miṭho bolne śakti viveka
pāirahechu sohidvārā, bandhana, gāli, dhamkī sārā

"Oh Fate! You gave me only the power of melodious speech, and
discrimination,
And what do these obtain for me, save confinement, abuse and
constant threats!"

The style of Lekhnāth's poetry changed very little in the years following the publication of Lālitya. Rather, he sought to perfect his art in the particular style he had chosen, and he continued to work on the alaṅkāra or "embellishment" of his ornamental language, remaining quite unaffected by notions of social reform or literary modernity until the 1930s.[20]

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18. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.38.
19. Taken from the Royal Nepal Academy's collection of Nepali poems entitled Ādhunik Nepālī Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1971, pp.15-16.
20. Ratnadhvaja Jośī: "Kaviśiromaṇi Lekhanāth: Bhāṣāśailī" in Kṛṣṇacandrasingh Pradhān (ed.): Sājhā Samālocanā, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, p.26.

Lekhnāth embarked upon one of his most important contributions to Nepali poetry at quite an early stage of his career: his first khaṇḍa kāvya, entitled Ṛtu Vicāra, "Contemplation of the Seasons", was published in 1916. The khaṇḍa kāvya genre of poetry owes much of its prestige in Nepali to Lekhnāth; the term is best translated as "episodic poetry" and the main difference between it and mahākāvya, "epic poetry" is the greater length of the latter. A khaṇḍa kāvya generally treats a single theme and is divided into "episodes" which are usually of approximately equal length.

Ṛtu Vicāra was one of the earliest Nepali khaṇḍa kāvya and it demonstrated a maturity in the poetry of Lekhnāth which was almost without precedent. Varṣā Vicāra was evidently a "prototype" for Ṛtu Vicāra, as it was enlarged to one hundred verses to form one of the six "episodes" of the longer work. Lekhnāth's primary source for the composition of Ṛtu Vicāra was probably the Ṛtusaṃhāra,[21] "The Garland of the Seasons" of the Sanskrit poet Kālīdāsa (4th-5th centuries) and his aim seems to have been to endow his poetic language with the same delicacy and dignity which had distinguished the works of the great poets of classical Sanskrit literature. Each of the six "episodes" of Ṛtu Vicāra describes one of the six seasons (vasanta (Spring), grīṣma (the hot season), varṣā (the rains), śarad (Autumn), and the winter seasons of hemanta and śiśira), and comprises one hundred couplets in anuṣṭava metre.

Many of the similes which Lekhnāth employed in his descriptions of the seasons were borrowed from the Sanskrit poetry with which he was so familiar, for example:

pratyeka puṣpako rūpa, rekhā, raṅga aneka cha
tara saundaryako jyoti unamā bhitra eka cha[22]

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21. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.13.
22. Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl, op.cit., 1934, p.5 (Vasanta Vicāra 28).

"Various are the shapes, the outlines and the colours of
each and every flower,
But it is the same light of beauty which is within them all."

hilaimā bhyāguto bascha hilaimā kamala-sthiti
sthānale mātra ke garnū? bhinnai cha guṇako gati[23]

"Both the frog and the lotus dwell in the mud,
But of what import is their mere location? The progress of
their virtue differs utterly."

The poetic language of Ṛtu Vicāra is frequently praised for the subtlety of its alliteration, and the dexterity with which Lekhnāth constructed his internal rhymes:

divya ānandako raṅga divya-kānti-taraṅga cha
divya unnatiko ḍhaṅga divya sārā prasaṅga cha[24]

"Divine the colours of bliss, divine the ripples of lustre,
Divine the manner of their progress, divine the entire occasion."

The poet's use of onomatopoeic vocabulary is also worthy of note:

andhyārā rātamā sundā varṣāko jhanjhāvaṭa
paramānandakā ḍhokā svayaṃ khulchan khaṭākhaṭa[25]

"Hearing the strumming of the rain in the dark night,
The gates of bliss open immediately, of their own accord."

Although Sanskrit literature wielded a great deal of influence over Lekhnāth, he used some original Nepali similes, and also contrived to give this classical description of the seasons a recognisably Nepalese context:

bihānai śiramā pardā sūryako kiraṇāvali
mūrtidhārī tapasyā jhaiṃ jhalkanchan himakā culī[26]

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23. Ibid., p.17 (Vasanta Vicāra 99).
24. Ibid., p.3 (Vasanta Vicāra 13).
25. Ibid., p.47 (Varṣā Vicāra 75).
26. Ibid., p.59 (Śarad Vicāra 47).

"As a multitude of the sun's rays fall upon their heads at dawn,
The snowpeaks shine like images of asceticism."

Lekhnāth's second publication of 1916 was Buddhi Vinoda, "The Enjoyment of Wisdom", another khaṇḍa kāvya which was republished in a revised and enlarged form of 101 verses in 1937.[27] The poem represents the poet's exposition of and inquiry into Saṅkhyā philosophy and the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. Its questioning tone is exemplified by the first verse:

kahāṃ thiyo bāsa aghī ma ko thiyeṃ?
kaso hundā yo pinjaṛā lindo bhayeṃ?
kahāṃ cha jānū? kun sātha līkana?
taṃlāī mālum cha ki? yo kurā mana![28]

"Where was my home and who was I before?
How did I come to inhabit this cage?
Where am I to go? What should I take with me?
Oh my mind! Do you know these things?"

The poem continues with questions and philosophical observations, and Lekhnāth experiments with new Sanskrit vocabulary. The content of Buddhi Vinoda is abstruse in places, and the poem is consequently less accessible than Ṛtu Vicāra.

In 1917, Lekhnāth made a temporary diversion away from poetry, and he wrote several plays. Two of these, Bhartṛharī Nirveda (1917) and Abhijāna Śakuntalā (1918), were translations of Sanskrit dramas, the latter being the fourth Nepali version of the Śakuntalopākhyāna.[29] The prose drama Lakṣmī-Pūjā, "The Worship of Lakṣmī", was an original

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27. Pradhan, op.cit. 1975, p.15
28. Quoted in ibid., p.15.
29. The other Nepali versions of the story of Shakuntalā were translated by Pahalmān Singh Svāra (1878-1934), Śambhuprasād Ḍhungel (1889-1929) and Khaḍgamān Malla. All of these are now overshadowed by the popularity of Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā's Śākuntalā (1945).

composition which contained much of merit. The clear distinctions which Lekhnāth presented between the speech of the uneducated rural characters and that of the sophisticated city-dwellers in his story of Nepalese villagers showed a skill in the composition of dialogue which was to remain undeveloped. Lekhnāth was influenced by the popularity of Hindi drama in the Nepal of his time, and he also wrote five Hindi dramas which are as yet unpublished.[30]

A third khaṇḍa kāvya, Satya-Kali-Samvāda, "A Dialogue Between the Age of Truth and the Degenerate Era", was published in 1919. It is considered inferior to his other khaṇḍa kāvya, and Pradhan suggests that it was written at a much earlier date.[31] In 374 stanzas, Lekhnāth preached Hindu revivalism, deprecated foreign domination and suggested the adoption of modern technology in Nepal. It is the first poem in which he addresses himself to social issues and the following verse, concerning the fate of the poor during the degenerate Kali Yuga, is often quoted as the most outstanding of the whole work:

kali....kāṛhī tarakka pasinā dinarāta ḍoko
boke panī udaragarta rahancha bhoko
pāyo jahām jasari jo saba tyo capāyo
niskyo upadra bhīṣaṇ rog āyo[32]

"He carries the basket day and night, sweating profusely,
But still his stomach is hungry,
He ate anything he could get, anywhere and in any way,
Resulting in calamity and the advent of terrible disease."

A modern critic, Ratnadhvaja Jośī, observes that the language of Satya-Kali Samvāda remained relatively undeveloped in comparison with that of Ṛtu Vicāra, but he allows that the poem as a whole emphasised the ability of the poet to compose a lengthy discourse on a subject which would seem to be limited in scope.[33]

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30. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.77.
31. Ibid., p.14.
32. Puṣkar Shamsher (ed.): Nepālī Padyasaṅgraha, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1949, p.68.
33. Jośī in Pradhān (ed.), op.cit., 1977, p.26.

Lekhnāth neglected to develop the promise of his early khaṇḍa kāvya until much later in his life, but he continued to compose a great number of poems which were published in the literary journals which were beginning to emerge in Nepal and India. Pradhan enumerates his contributions to a few of these: sixteen poems were published in Bhāratī from 1949-57, at least thirty-five in Śāradā 1935-51 and so on;[34] dozens of his compositions appeared in the many short-lived journals of the period. Many others were probably never published and may now be lost. Two collections of his poems, Lālitya, vols. 1 and 2 were published in Birāṭnagar, in 1953; these contain a total of one hundred poems. Many of Lekhnāth's most famous compositions have been included in other published collections: Sājhā Kavitā (1967), contains four, Ādhunika Nepālī Kavitā (1971) includes ten, and so on. No comprehensive collection of his poems has yet been published; perhaps the publication of a third volume of Lālitya would be in order.

The miscellaneous poems which Lekhnāth wrote in such large numbers until his death in 1965 cover a variety of topics and convey all of the nine rasa. He composed devotional poems, philosophical poems and patriotic poems, poems about money, science and Nepal, poetic descriptions of the beauty of the natural world, poems about himself, and so on.

Despite their didactic content, some of these poems have a whimsical charm and many of them are deliberately couched in uncharacteristically simple language. One such poem was Gaunthalīko Ciribiri, "The Chirping of a Swallow", which was first published in Śāradā in 1935. The bird propounds the Vedantic philosophy of impermanence to the poet:

timile bhanchau yo ghara mero
ma pani kahanchu yai ghara mero
vāstava timro ho vā mero
khūba lagāū manamā phero[35]

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34. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, pp.43-47.
35. (verse 3) Lālitya, vol.2, Birāṭnagar (3rd edn.), 1968, p.2.

"You say this house is yours,
I too say that it is mine,
To whom, in fact, does it belong?
Turn your mind to this!"

bhautika sampati araba kamāū
jala, thala, nabha saba ṭamma jamāū
tyasmā timro unnati chaina
tyo saba sapanāko ho caina[36]

"Acquire worldly wealth by the billion,
Fill the waters, earth and sky right up,
But your progress will not result from it,
It is all the relief of dreams."

The language of Lekhnāth's devotional poems is more Sanskritised; they are admired for their beauty and the sincerity of the emotions which are expressed. Sarasvati-Smṛti, "Recalling Saraswati", is a fine example of this type of poem,

mihīṃ prāṇai bīṇā, mana mṛdu nakhī, kampa kalanā,
garī lākhauṃ jhikti svara-madhurimā smerabadanā!
rasīlo phakreko hṛdaya-kamalai āsana garī
basekī vāgdevī kṣanabhara nabirsūṃ junibharī.[37]

"She plays upon the lute of the tender soul,
Plucking thousands of sweet sounds with the gentle nails of the mind,
As she sits upon the fully-opened lotus of the heart;
May I never forget the goddess Saraswati, through the whole of my life."

Lekhnāth's language becomes most ornate when he describes the beauty of Nature; prākṛti varṇana, the genre of poetry which celebrates natural beauty, became a vehicle for his experiments in alaṅkāra. A typical example of this kind of allegorical verse was his poem Aruṇodaya, which was first published in Śāradā in 1935:

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36. (verse 23) Ibid., p.7.
37. Royal Nepal Academy, op.cit., 1971, p.3.

(1) jaya jagadīśvara! manako rahamā
śūnya gaganamaya bhitrī tahamā
palapala śītala kalanā-laharī
kalakala garchan ṭhaharī-ṭhaharī

(2) madhura dhvaniko śravaṇa-vivaramā
rekhā khinciyo pancama suramā
jati-jati ḍubikana herdachu bhitra
uti-uti mildacha bhāva pavitra[38]

"Glory to the Lord! In the pool of the mind,
On its innermost surfaces, like the empty sky,
Cool ripples splash from time to time,
Gurgling and bubbling here and there.

Within the ear, a mellifluous sound
Is drawn out in the fifth note,
And the more I immerse myself to look within,
The more I experience a holy mood."

The whole poem represents an obscure philosophical abstraction and the meaning of the work may be interpreted in several ways; the commentator in Himāl Culī, a literary textbook, relates the rising of the sun in the poem to the publication of Śāradā monthly.[39] Lekhnāth was not averse to more straightforward poems of prākṛti varṇana, however, and those which deal with an aspect of Nepal often bear patriotic overtones. One such is his description of the Himalaya mountains, Himāla, first published in a journal, Siṃhanāda, in 1961:

latreko māthadekhi padataka himako svaccha seto uparnā
motīkā hāra jastā tharithari uramā jhaljhalākāra jharnā
phusro dhussā sāmānai kamara jaghanamā phusphuse meghajāla
dekhdai āscarya lāgdo aṭala cahakilo dhanya hāmro himāla[40]

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38. Ishwar Baral (ed.): Dīpikā: Nepālī Sāhitya ra Himāl Culī, Darjeeling, 1970, pp.62-63.
39. Ibid., p.69.
40. Tārāprasād Jośī (ed.): Nepālī Kavitā Saṅgraha, Kathmandu, 1973, p.14.

"A scarf of pure white snow hangs down from its head to
its feet,
Glistening cascades grace its breast, like strings of pearls,
A net of drizzling cloud surrounds its waist and hips, like
a grey woollen shawl,
It is amazing to see, immovable and bright, our blessed
Himalaya."

Although the vocabulary which Lekhnāth employed in this kind of poem is by no means colloquial, it is less abstruse and does not attempt to offer a profound philosophical insight. The poem is purely descriptive, with much use being made of similes and allegories which had often been coined by Lekhnāth himself.

Later in his life, Lekhnāth became more overtly nationalistic, and utilised his poetic skills to appeal to the many Nepalese who had emigrated to India. The final verse of the poem Pravāsī-Bandhusita, "To My Brothers Abroad", is another description of the Himalaya, with a patriotic overtone:

yo lambā himaśailakā cahakilā aglā hajāraum culī
yī chāṅgā, chaharā, yinai nada, nadī muskānako bhāva lī
timrai purvajakā kathāmaya miṭhā gāthā suselchan saba
svāpnāmā pani bandhuvarga! na bhule nepālako gaurava[41]

"The myriad immovable and lofty peaks of this long Himalaya,
These waterfalls and cascades, these streams and rivers;
Cheerfully, they all whistle the sweet narrative songs of
your ancestors;
Oh my brothers! Never forget the pride of Nepal, even in
your dreams."

Lekhnāth also took up specific issues of nationalism in his poems; his Rāṣṭrabhāṣāko Bhaviṣyaupara Ekadṛṣṭi, "A View on the Future of the National Language" is a case in point.

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41. Lālitya, vol.2 (3rd edn.), Biratnagar 1968, p.16.

himālako svaccha upatyakāmā
jo khelcha ṭhaṇḍā himako havāmā
tyo rāṣṭrabhāṣā baliyo na holā
bhanne jagatmā kuna mūrkha holā?[42]

"In the fresh Himalayan valley
It plays in the cool snow breeze,
Where in the world is the fool
Who would say that the national language will not be strong?"

This account of the poetry of Lekhnāth's "middle period" is necessarily cursory, for his work was prodigious, but certain generalisations can be made about these poems. Lekhnāth was, in the first place, not an āśukavi, a "Poet of the Flood"; he approached his work in the deliberate manner of a craftsman, constructing his verse with great attention to metre, vocabulary, alliteration and rhetoric. Many poems were rewritten several times before the poet was satisfied with them. His primary concern was to create a "sweetness" in his poetry and he chose his vocabulary and constructed alliterative rhymes to that end. He also contrived to communicate certain philosophical insights to the reader of his poems; these were almost always traditional Hindu interpretations of the world, borrowing greatly from Vedānta, and they remained generally unaffected by the new ideas which were becoming popular among the educated Nepalese and Indian élites under a growing western influence.

In 1950, Lekhnāth was invested by king Tribhuvan with the title of Kavi Śiromaṇi, "Crest-Jewel Poet", which is frequently translated as "Poet Laureate" and is indeed roughly equivalent to that English title in the Nepali literary world.[43] Since Lekhnāth's death, however, no other poet has received the title, and so it would seem that it is his in perpetuity. He is still referred to as Kavi Śiromaṇi Lekhnāth Paudyāl.

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42. Ibid., p.23.
43. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.65.

As it was for many other poets, 1950 was a kind of "watershed" for Lekhnāth. The newly-invested Kavi Śiromaṇi again turned his hand to khaṇḍa kāvya and it was during this period that he composed his most highly-regarded work. As the "Poet Laureate", Lekhnāth was more free to express his own opinions on current affairs, and after 1950 the "establishment" became somewhat more liberal in its world-view. Hence his first composition of post-1950 was a poem of 87 verses entitled Amara Jyotiko Satya-Smṛti, "Remembrance of the Truth of Undying Light", which expressed grief and outrage at the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Under the Rana regime, this might well have been open to mis-interpretation as expressing support for the Nepali Congress party, but under the new government, such fears were no longer a major consideration for Nepali poets.

Two years later, in 1953, Lekhnāth's "magnum opus" was published. This was a lengthy verse composition of nearly six hundred stanzas entitled Taruṇa Tapasī, "The Young Ascetic".[44] The whole work is structured as if it were intended to be a khaṇḍa kāvya in nineteen episodes, but its substantial length means that it is often referred to as a mahākāvya. Lekhnāth himself coined the term navya kāvya, "New Poetry" with reference to Taruṇa Tapasī, but this new category failed to win many adherents.[45]

Taruṇa Tapasī has been the subject of one of the most famous works of Nepali literary criticism, Taruṇa Tapasī Mīmāṃsā, by Cuḍānāth Bhaṭṭarāya, who is of the opinion that the work represents Lekhnāth's highest achievement.[46] It is still regarded among the very best of all Nepali poetic works, and it does indeed constitute a summary of all the talents of its author.

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44. Or: "The Ascetic Tree". Although taruṇa means "young", taru means tree. The title may have been a deliberate pun on this word.
45. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.48.
46. Published in 1961.

The plot of Taruṇa Tapasī is as follows: a poet is stricken by grief at the death of his wife, and he goes to sit beneath a tree by the wayside. As he sits there, an ascetic (who later turns out to be the spirit of the tree), appears before him. This ascetic tells his life-story to the poet; as a tree, rooted to one spot, he has experienced all of life's vicissitudes, and has observed the actions of the people who have rested beside his trunk. Thus, after long years of meditation, and the insights which his observation of the world has afforded him, he has become spiritually enlightened. His homily contains much worthy instruction for the poet and expresses Lekhnāth's own beliefs.

In Taruṇa Tapasī, Lekhnāth weaves the many strands of his talent together to form a complete work in which no one facet predominates over the others. The poem also contains much which can be readily construed as symbolism, allegory and autobiography. The descriptions of the changing seasons, which are reminiscent of Ṛtu Vicāra, are said to represent the advent and departure of the various rulers of Nepal, and the poet who has lost his wife almost certainly represents Lekhnāth himself.

The following extracts from Taruṇa Tapasī should serve to convey some of the characteristics of the poem. In episode one, the ascetic introduces himself to the poet,

...saphā nīlo tārā-jaḍita gaganai chādana kasī
banāyeko rāmro bhuvana-kuṭiyāko ma tapasī[47]

"I have clothed myself in the clean blue star-studded sky,
I am a renunciant, with the beautiful world for my house."

jahāṃ janmeko huṃ, vidhi-vaśa uhīṃ chu ajha khaḍā
sahī lākhauṃ carkā viṣada athavā saṅkaṭa kaḍā[48]

"Fate has it that I still stand where I was born,
Having endured thousands of difficult and cruel crises."

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47. Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl: Taruṇa Tapasī, Kathmandu, 1953, p.9.
48. Ibid., p.10.

The ascetic tells the poet of many of the events of his life which had taught him the philosophy of liberation. In one such episode, a hunter had come to the tree to shoot the birds which were nesting in its branches. Lekhnāth composes the bird's lament,

na śakchau yo āṃśū ṭapaṭapa ṭipī cappa piuna
na śakchau māsūle dina bhara aghāyera jiuna
na śakchau yo bhutlā liikana kunai vastra siuna
cuṇḍyau vyarthai mero manuja! timile jīvana kina?[49]

"You cannot snatch up these tears to drink them,
You cannot be sustained by this meat or live on it even for a day,
You cannot sew a garment from these feathers,
Why, oh man, did you so uselessly cut my life short?"

Later on, some fruit-pickers came to the tree and they took far more than they needed, instead of distributing the surplus to others more needy. The following verse has unmistakeable political and social overtones,

jatī jo cahinthyo jaṭhara-hariko khātira utī
liye khāye pugthyo, muphata kina tyo sancaya ati
tyasaile gardāmā kati garibako bhāga hariyo
vidhātāko khātā upara saba tyo pāpa dariyo[50]

"If enough to propitiate the Lord of the stomach
Had been taken and eaten, it would have sufficed, what need
is there for hoarding what has been freely provided?
In acting in this way, how many of the poor have lost their share?
All those sins were entered in the Book of the Creator."

The ascetic goes on to condemn those who are obsessed by transient worldly pleasures,

ma khāūṃ, mai lāūṃ, sukha, sayala vā mauja ma garuṃ
ma bāncūṃ, mai nācūṃ, aru saba marūn durvala harū

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49. (Episode 6) ibid., p.46.
50. (Episode 10) ibid., p.82.

bhanī dāhvā dhasne abujha śaṭhadekhī chaka parī
citā khitkā chāḍī abhayasita hāṃsyo marimarī[51]

""I will eat (good food) and wear (fine clothes), I will be
happy, enjoying excursions and luxuries,
I will be saved; I will dance as all the other weak people die"
Astonished by the evil of the fools who say such things to
press their claims,
The funeral pyre abandoned its restraint and fearlessly
laughed aloud."

The morality of the whole poem is probably best summed up by the following two verses;

dharitrīmā sattya śrama ra pasināko bhara parī
tapasyā jo garchan sarala manale jīvana bharī
tinaiko tyai sattya śrama ra pasinā-rupa tapako
cirasthāyī yai ho pariṇati ujyālo gajabako

garī jhuṭṭā, vāṅgā, chala, kapaṭa vā jāla, bahanā
piyekāchan jasle muphata arukā uṣṇa pasinā
yahāṃ tyastā dambhī puruṣa dharaṇīkā dhanapati
kunai chainan, jyādai tala cha tinako garhita gati[52]

"Those upon this earth who depend on truth, labour and sweat
And practice a simple devout austerity throughout their lives,
Their asceticism of truth, labour and sweat
Has a radiant and wondrous final transformation which lasts for ever.

Those who lie, and practice perversion, fraud, deceit, trickery
or pretence,
And partake of the hot sweat of others, freely given,
No such conceited man can be the God of Wealth,
The progress of their evil merely drags them down."

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51. (Episode 18) ibid., p.152.
52. (Episode 15) ibid., p.130.

According to the ascetic, these words are inscribed upon the gates of Paradise; thus, they can be assumed to represent Lekhnāth's personal creed.

Taruṇa Tapasī was succeeded by two other khaṇḍa kāvya before Lekhnāth died; Mero Rāma, "My Rāma", is his concise version of the Rāmāyaṇa, which incorporates all of the most important events of the story in a total of 278 stanzas in śragdhara metre. Pradhan states that the composition of Mero Rāma took seven years, and it was eventually published in 1954.[53] The Rāmagītā, in which the underlying philosophy of the whole work is expounded, is the most developed portion of the book, comprising 41 verses. The second khaṇḍa kāvya of this period was never completed; the first four cantos and a portion of the fifth canto of Gaṅgā Gaurī were published in the literary quarterly Kavitā between 1964 and 1967. Gangā Gaurī retold the story of the goddess of the Ganges river, with a great deal of borrowing from Sanskrit sources.[54]

Lekhnāth was further honoured by the Nepali literary world when he became the focal point of a peculiar procession in Kathmandu in 1954. The old poet was seated in a ratha, a kind of religious chariot, and was paraded through the city, the vehicle being pulled by many of the poets of the day, and even the Prime Minister, Mātrikā Prasād Koiralā.[55] In 1957, he was awarded a post in the new Royal Nepal Academy. These honours are a mark of the peculiar reverence felt by the poets and academics of Nepal for the man who more than any other represents a "classical" genre of their poetry. He can no longer escape the scorn of the young for the old-fashioned, however, and his poems are no longer imitated by aspiring poets. The following words of Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā defend him from his critics:

> "Modern novices accuse him of innumerable failings: he is overly cautious and unspontaneous, making too much use of ornamental rhetoric. His poetry is ostentatious, and he is excessively

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53. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.60.
54. Ibid., pp.89-90.
55. Ibid., pp.65-66. Pradhan states that Lekhnāth was also awarded 5,000 rupees.

dexterous in his use of alliteration. Modernity is entirely absent from his poetry, which suffers from a preponderance of Sanskrit and is chequered by similes. His mellifluous language is too sweet, and far from its spoken counterpart. His metrical constructions fragment the expression of his philosophy, making the emotions seem stilted and halting. The daintiness of his vocabulary is decadent.....

Accusations of unspontaneous craftsmanship are not entirely without substance, but this is not merely a work of construction, it is Art. One cannot complain that something which is founded on natural laws is over-ornamented or ostentatious.... Modernity is a term which has only recently been coined, so a lack of modernity should not be regarded as such a major flaw. If we are contemptuous of Sanskrit, we are doing nothing but depriving ourselves; although a branch of literature could quite feasibly exist in pure or colloquial Nepali, we would lose the refinement which is necessary in profound or advanced composition; it would seem a little odd....whether poetry should be composed in colloquial language is still a matter for dispute: we praise attempts which are made to utilise the melodiousness of rural or mountain dialects, but this, after all, is not our only resort. Even if one believes that the metrical construction of poetry fragments its flow, it remains true that less blame can be attached to the poet whose emotions emerge in rounded, developed, smooth and illuminated forms than to the poet who expresses himself in an undeveloped torrent of primitivism."[56]

These comments from one of Lekhnāth's most illustrious contemporaries would seem to summarise both attitudes which are now current among modern Nepali writers to the poetry of Lekhnāth Paudyāl.

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56. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Lakṣmīnibandhasaṅgraha, Kathmandu, 1945, pp.222-223.

Lekhnāth continued to compose poetry right up until his death in 1965, and several of these later poems are explicitly personal. The title of Vayoṛrddha Koilīko Bilaunā, "The Lament of an Aged Cuckoo", speaks for itself. The last verse gives a fair indication of its tone,

diśā tyo mahendrī, udayagirimā
tyo sunaharī -
uṣākā uṭhdai chan
ati mṛdula āloka-laharī
ma bolūṃ bhandai chū, tara saba galā gharghara cha yo
kaṭhai! tyo ānandi madhura vaya mero saba gayo[57]

"In that land of Mahendra, on the peak of Dawn
Arise the waves of splendour,
The gentle gold of the sun.
I was going to sing, but this throat is hoarse,
Alas! All my sweet years of happiness have passed."

Lekhnāth's last poem was posthumously given the title of Ākhirī Kavitā, "Last Poem". It is very short and should be quoted here in its entirety, as it is rather a fine epitaph to the Poet Laureate of Nepal,

yo dukha bhogne parameśvarai ho
yo deha usko rahane gharai ho
yo bhatkandā dukha avaśya māncha
suṭukka sāmāna liera jāncha[58]

"It is God himself who endures this pain,
This body is the very house he inhabits,
By its fall he is surely saddened,
He quietly picks up his things, and goes."

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57. Royal Nepal Academy, op.cit., 1971, p.22.
58. Ibid., p.23.

Chapter 17

Bālakṛṣṇa Sama (1902-1981)

Sama is very widely regarded to have been the greatest of Nepali playwrights, and one of the finest Nepali poets; his death in 1981 was felt by many to mark the "end of an era". Sama's prolific literary career began in earnest with the publication of his first drama, Muṭuko Vyathā, in 1929; his published works include at least fifteen dramas, ten one-act plays, twelve short stories, twenty-eight essays, over a hundred poems, and a literary autobiography in two parts. There are said to be, in addition, a number of manuscripts which are as yet unpublished.[1]

Sama was born Bālakṛṣṇa Shamsher Jang Bahādur Rana in his family's palace of Jñāneśvar in Kathmandu, in the month of Māgh, vikram samvat 1959 (February, 1902).[2] His father, General Samar Shamsher, was then placed eleventh in the line of succession to the post of Prime Minister;[3] as a member of the ruling élite, he enjoyed all the privileges accorded to the son of a Rana. Later in his life, however, he turned against Rana autocracy, and this change of heart is evident in his writings. The young Bālakṛṣṇa began his education at the age of four; his tutor was Til Mādhava Devkoṭā, a pandit whose son, Lakṣmīprasād, was later honoured as the Nepali mahākavi. In 1913, Bālakṛṣṇa and his brother, Puṣkar Shamsher, were admitted to the Darbar High School.[4]

During his formative years, Sama lived in quite sumptuous surroundings and was given the best education available in the Nepal of his time. He must have been an unusually gifted child, nevertheless, for poetry

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1. Paras Mani Pradhan: Balkrishna Sama, Kalimpong, 1980, pp.77-78. This study, in English, gives a list of these unpublished manuscripts.
2. Ibid., p.3.
3. Ibid., p.1. (The office of Prime Minister was hereditary in the Rana governments.)
4. Ibid., p.3.

and drama began to attract him at an early age, through the instruction given him by his tutor and his father, and his close relationship with a devout elder sister who died in 1915. Unusually for a Nepali poet, Sama began an autobiography; although this was never completed, it contains a vivid account of his childhood and youth, and also yields a great deal of information concerning the Nepali literary scene of the time.[5]

In his autobiogrpahy, Sama recalls that his father's palace was the venue for regular performances of drama and music before exclusive Rana audiences. The young Bālakṛṣṇa thus acquired a liking for songs and music and his education also imparted to him a sense of reverence for sacred literature, including the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta;

> "....up until that time, it had never occurred to me that the Rāmāyaṇa had been written by a human being; when I saw my sister bowing to the book in salutation, I thought that it had been created by one or another of the gods..... how could a mere man create such a book!"[6]

Sama was so influenced by the poetry that was recited to him by his father and his tutor that he began to compose his own verses before he was eight years old.[7] Samar Shamsher was often away from home, in Dehra Dun or Palpa, and father and son sometimes corresponded in verse. Sama's compositions were often returned to him corrected so that they conformed to a particular metre.[8] At the Darbar School, he also conceived an affection for English poetry, especially that of Wordsworth and Gray. In 1914 he translated Wordsworth's Lucy Gray:

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5. The autobiography has been published in two volumes entitled Mero Kavitāko Ārādhana ("My Worship of Poetry"), vol.1, Kathmandu 1966, vol.2 (Campū), Kathmandu, 1972.
6. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Mero Kavitāko Ārādhana (vol.1), Kathmandu, 1966, p.14.
7. Ibid., p.16.
8. Ibid., pp.18-19.

aghi pani ta ma sunthem̐ lusi gre nāma aksar
jaba garisakiyo ek jaṅgi maidānako pār
bhai asala sumaukā ek saberai bihānmā
najara pugna pāyo ekalī bālikāmā[9]

"Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child."

Nepali poets were beginning to acquire some familiarity with European literature, and many translations were produced during this period. Lucy Gray is still a well-known and popular poem in Nepal, perhaps because the immediate phonetic appeal of its rhymes and metre can transcend any difficulty which might be experienced by a Nepali reader in comprehending its meaning.[10]

Despite his interest in English poetry, Sama was greatly impressed by the early works of the Poet Laureate, Lekhnāth Paudyāl, whose Buddhi-Vinod and Ṛtu-Vicāra he read in 1915:

"I felt that I had found a priceless, unprecedented voice, a voice of emeralds and diamonds; I memorised [these lines] within a few days. I was astounded that Poetry, my own goddess, could have been worshipped so fervently! My faith in Poetry was enhanced beyond all bounds, and became almost religious..... Later, I discovered that that small book of Lekhnāth's poems had brought changes to the whole world of Nepali poetry, and not just to me."[11]

Lekhnāth's influence on Sama is discernible in Sama's earliest poems, such as Taraṅga, "The Wave" (1915)[12] The second great influence

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9. Ibid., p.56.
10. Mādhavaprasād Ghimire: personal communication, Kathmandu, 1981.
11. Sama, op.cit., 1966, p.82.
12. The text of this poem is published in ibid., pp.88-91.

on Sama's writings was the important collection of poems published in 1917, Sūkti-Sindhu, "Ocean of Aphorisms".[13] Poets such as Lekhnāth, Somanāth Śarmā, Cakrapāṇi Cālise, Rudrarāja Pāṇḍe and Motīrām Bhaṭṭa were represented in this collection, which was dominated by poetry of the śṛṅgāra rasa;

> "The poetry of the śṛṅgāra rasa caught hold of me,
> and I began to spend much of my time in observing
> the faces, eyes, lips, necks and the whole bodies
> of young women."[14]

Although he remained an indefatigable mimic, Sama had begun to embark on more ambitious literary projects by the time he reached the age of eighteen. His written Nepali continued to be somewhat grandiloquent with a great deal of Sanskrit vocabulary, contrived to impress his elders. His first khaṇḍa kāvya or "episodic poem", Eka Prabhāta Smaraṇa ("A Dawn Remembrance")[15] was completed in 1920, and followed by another, Āryaghāṭa, in 1921.[16] He finished writing his first play, Tānsenko Jhari, ("Rain at Tansen") in 1922: this was published by Sājhā in 1970.[17]

From 1920 to 1950, Sama became steadily more critical of the autocratic Rana regime, and increasingly saddened by the 'backward' state of Nepalese society. In 1921 he left his wife, who was six months pregnant with their first child, to travel to Calcutta for his matriculation examination. His stay there was lengthened by unforeseen delays and he familiarised himself with Calcutta, comparing the relative modernity of the city to Kathmandu, and learning something of Indian politics.[18] After a few months, he heard that his son had been born, but had died shortly afterwards:

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13. A second edition of Sūkti Sindhu, edited by S.P.Āryāl and Kamal Dīkṣit, was published in Kathmandu in 1967.
14. Sama, op.cit., 1966, pp.95-96.
15. The text of this poem is published in ibid., pp.162-219.
16. Text published in ibid., pp.251-299.
17. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Tānsenko Jhari, Kathmandu, 1970.
18. Sama, op.cit., 1966, pp.305-308.

"Oh, my country! If it had happened in Calcutta, my child would surely have been saved. The appalling condition of my homeland, in this very century, had murdered my son....but this event brought about a great change in my life. Revolution began to smoulder, deep within my heart....."[19]

Sama's most creative period began in the late 1920s; between 1929 and 1960 he wrote his most highly-regarded plays and poems. The novelty of his first few plays can only be fully appreciated when they are considered in the social and literary context of their time. Although Nepalese audiences were fond of drama, the annual Gāī Jātrā festival was one of the few occasions in the year when the Government permitted plays to be staged for the general public.[20] Buffoonery and sentiment were equally popular, but the scope of Nepali drama prior to 1920 had been restricted to rather amateur adaptations of Sanskrit or Hindi plays, or of Parsee theatre from Bombay. According to Ishwar Baral, the characters of such plays were often divine or super-human; they spoke in a language which was declamatory and full of loud asides, to create an effect which was often burlesque or macabre, but very rarely realistic.[21]

Sama began Muṭuko Vyathā in 1926 and it was published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti at the beginning of 1929.[22] A five-act play of fifteen scenes, Muṭuko Vyathā ("Heart's Anguish") takes the traditional theme of viyoga, unrequited love between separated lovers, and sets it in a recognisably Nepalese idiom. For the first time, Sama made a conscious effort to simplify and colloquialise his language, and was largely successful in making it more accessible to audiences other than the exclusively Rana assemblies before whom it was first performed. This is exemplified by the following speech by Mādhava, the hero of the story:

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19. Ibid., p.308.
20. Ishwar Baral: "Balkrishna Sama", Kailash, vol.2, no.2 (1974), p.190.
21. Ibid., p.190.
22. Pradhan, op.cit., 1980, p.8.

tyo belā! aba tyo belā gayo hā! kapilā ra ma saṅgai khelthyauṃ, sangai ḍulthyauṃ, tyo eka dina āmpako vṛkṣamantira maile yo sodheṃ - "ke kapilā, timi vivāha masaṅgai garchyau? usle tyo javābamā haṃsilo netrale "huncha" bhanī....[23]

"Those times, alas, they are now passed! Kapilā and I used to play together and run about together, and one day under the mango tree I asked her, "Well, Kapilā, will you marry me?" With her smiling eyes, she replied, "Yes, alright".

Baral writes,

"[audiences]....were naturally startled with a play which presented a facsimile of Nepali life and society, characters being drawn from ordinary people speaking naturally and at ease; by a play which, on top of this, was a tragedy."[24]

Sama seems to have been influenced by Shakespeare and Tennyson, and especially by the former. The following lines, spoken by Kapilā, the heroine, are strongly reminiscent of Macbeth's "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow / creeps in this petty pace from day to day....

nacetī lokamā hāmi bholiko bhara pardachauṃ birsidinchauṃ hijolāī, ājacāhiṃ sarasara bholi bhanchauṃ; sabai bholi hijo bandai bīti bīti jāndaichan....[25]

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23. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Muṭuko Vyathā (Act 2, Scene 4), Kathmandu, (2nd edn.), 1942, p.38.
24. Baral, op.cit., 1974, p.190.
25. Sama, op.cit., 1942 (Act 3, Scene 3), p.58.

"We rely upon tomorrow in this world, without realising
that we do so,
We consign yesterday to oblivion, and without pause
Today we say tomorrow; each and every tomorrow
Passes into yesterday...."

The whole play was written in blank verse, conventional metres being dispensed with throughout, except for the song in act 1, scene 2. Again, this could be attributed to Shakespearian influence; Baral writes that his use of the verse play was a deliberate choice,

"In a country accustomed to the traditional play, it was much easier to touch and hold an audience through a verse form, more so because a verse play took less time to produce, its mnemonic quality much higher than that of the prose."[26]

Hoping to make his name with this drama, Sama distributed dozens of copies free of charge, to the distress of his tutor, who held the opinion that a nominal payment would increase its desirability.[27] Sama declared,

"I experienced a peculiar emotion when Heart's Anguish came out. When a man sees his first published work, he is as thrilled as he is at the birth of his first child, or the completion of his first painting...."[28]

At that time, all Nepali books proferred for publication were inspected by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti; even those that met with the Samiti's approval were sometimes censored or edited. Sama was frustrated when the Samiti took an inordinately long time to sanction the publication of Muṭuko Vyathā;

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26. Baral, op.cit., 1974, p.191.
27. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Mero Kavitāko Ārādhana Upāsanā 2 (Campū), Kathmandu, 1972, p.90.
28. Ibid., p.88.

"....those gentlemen couldn't take time off from inspecting books in foreign languages, to look at a Nepali book."[29]

As a consequence, Sama himself undertook the publication of his next play, Dhruva, in 1929; the second edition of this play was published by the Samiti two years later.[30] Although Dhruva was written in a language which was just as colloquial as that of Muṭuko Vyathā, its themes were more traditional, as they were adapted from the Bhagavad Gītā.

The story of Dhruva, a young Indian prince, revolves around the machinations of rival queens; the king is persuaded to exile Dhruva to the forest so that a younger prince can accede to the throne in his absence. Conventional morality is eventually restored by the sage Nārada, who makes the king admit the error of his ways.

Sama's third play of the same year (1929) was never published. Entitled Amalekha, "Liberation", it was seen by the Samiti as too overtly political for its approval, and Sama can hardly have been surprised by this decision. In the second part of his autobiography, he reproduces the lines to which the Samiti objected, and the following are examples of their tone:

....dhanale kati jāti bandacha? ke iśa hāmilāī manuṣyamā gandaina?
....ke manuṣya manuṣyako paśu ho? saba śākhākā mūla tī manu hoinan? murkha nai paśu ho, dukhi gariba paśu hoina, uhi ho paśu jo bhancha bhāilāī pani paśu."[31]

"....how many castes come about through wealth? Does the Lord not count us among men?
....is man the beast of man? Is Manu[32] not the root of all branches? It is the fool who is a beast, not the poor or the distressed, the beast is he who calls his brother a beast."

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29. Ibid., p.88.
30. Pradhan, op.cit., 1980, p.12.
31. Sama, op.cit., 1972, pp.92-93.
32. This is, presumably, a reference to Maṇu Smṛti.

A friend of Sama, a man named Cakrapāṇi, was employed by the Samiti at the time; he explained their decision to Sama,

> "(in this play) there is a great deal of praise for the freeing of bondsmen, but the slave's individual circumstance is portrayed in a communal form, as if it were the situation of the entire population. The main purpose of the play is to demonstrate that questions of great and small, or rich and poor, are not earned in previous existences, but are the result of social injustice. This it makes quite clear, so what effect would it have upon the people? Surely it will make them think, "Yes, we want freedom, yes, liberation is democracy", therefore, however good the play might be, it would be difficult for them to approve it."[33]

In 1930 Sama was appointed to a teaching post at the Darbar School in Kathmandu and for the next few years he found little time for writing plays, although he continued to compose poems which remained unpublished. As a teacher, he was obliged to pay attention to the state of his pupils' written Nepali and he fulminated against the "grammatical anarchy" which prevailed among them.[34] Most Nepali textbooks were commissioned and published by the Samiti at that time, and Chandra Shamsher had decreed that their language should conform with the rules endorsed by the rājaguru, Hemarāja, in the Madhyacandrikā grammar.[35]

Sama, however, found that his students' Nepali was completely unstandardised and he began to insist that they should write in accordance with the Madhyacandrikā if they wished to pass their examinations. Unfortunately, other teachers were less concerned by this issue, and even some noted Nepali poets refused to accept the rules set out by Hemarāja. Sama however, was adamant;

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33. Sama, op.cit., 1972, pp.91-92.
34. Ibid., p.108.
35. Somanāth Śarmā: Madhyacandrikā. Nepālī Mājhaulā Vyākaraṇa, Kathmandu, 1917. The publication of this grammar, condensed from the Candrikā grammar which had the seal of official approval, silenced much of the debate concerning the standardisation of written Nepali.

"One day even the poet Lekhnāth will have to accept the Samiti's grammar, for the sake of the nation and for national unity."[36]

He was also annoyed by the increasing prestige of English and Hindi, especially in the fields of drama and music. Gramophone records were available to the élite sectors of society and the popularity of this new culture was increasing rapidly. He was particularly opposed to the influence of Hindi drama:

"If no plays are produced in their own country, the people will be in the pocket of foreign drama. Although we may remain politically independent, we will become culturally dependent. This is what prompts me to write plays...."[37]

In September 1932, Juddha Shamsher came to power as the new Prime Minister and brought with him a new and slightly more liberal attitude to the government of Nepal.[38] Juddha astounded his contemporaries by declaring himself amenable to suggestions for reforms from his subjects. Sama took this opportunity to make his feelings known on what he perceived to be a decline in the cultural prestige of his country, and composed a lengthy binti-patra, letter of entreaty, which he submitted with some trepidation to the Mahārājā. In the most humble tone, Sama complained of the lack of progress and the increasing foreign influence in fields such as domestic architecture, education and drama, and even food and clothing.[39] The reaction to his letter was favourable and he was invited to join the Prime Minister and his entourage on a hunting trip to the lowlands, an experience which inspired Sama to write his first essay of note, Bardāhamā Śikāra, "Hunting at Bardāha", which was published in Śāradā in 1934.[40] Later, in 1932, he was appointed as chairman of the Nepāli Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti and, although he continued to teach, this gave him more of an opportunity to produce his own works

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36. Sama, op.cit., 1972, p.109.
37. Ibid., p.112.
38. Juddha Shamsher (Prime Minister from 1932-1946), succeeded Bhim Shamsher (1929-1932).
39. The text of this letter is published in Sama, op.cit., 1972, pp.142-155.
40. Ibid., pp.157-158.

and to encourage writers to write the kind of Nepali literature of which he approved.[41]

Sama wrote a constant stream of plays and poems between 1935 and 1945 and his most highly-regarded dramas were published during this period. The first of these was Mukunda-Indirā, a five-act romance, which the Samiti published in 1937. Mukunda, the hero of the play, is married to Indirā at the age of thirteen. Soon he leaves for Calcutta, where he is to take his examinations, but instead of returning immediately to Nepal he stays on in India, adopting all kinds of disreputable habits and losing his trust in his wife. The play concludes with Mukunda's return to his homeland, where the couple are re-united. The central theme of Mukunda-Indirā is viyoga, the separation of lovers, but Sama adds a great deal of patriotic sentiment to this traditional tale. Unusually for the Nepali literature of its time, Mukunda-Indirā reflects aspects of the social realities which were contemporary with it. Many Nepalese were obliged to seek education or employment outside Nepal at this time, and many of them failed to return to their homeland. Thus Mukunda-Indirā was notable for its depiction of social reality, a feature which was soon to become the hallmark of modernity in Nepali literature. It was also unusual for the attempts which Sama made to effect some social reform by demonstrating the harmful effect which prolonged exile in India was supposed to have on Nepalese, or by heaping patriotic praise on the homeland;

> hāmro nepāla yo sāno saṃsārai ho, ki lokako
> kalpavṛkṣa yahī nai ho, yahāṃ pāincha je pani[42]
>
> "This, our Nepal, is a little world in itself, or it is the tree which grants the world's wishes; everything you want is here."

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41. Ibid., p.166.
42. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Mukunda-Indirā, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1947, p.19.

Although Sama's references to contemporary social and political issues were quite unusual in the Nepali literature of the 1930's, his moral stance was by no means controversial and much was made of Indirā's chastity and fidelity. The progressive philosophy which he had expressed in Amalekha was not restated in Mukunda-Indirā; perhaps he was reluctant to risk the banning of another play, or perhaps the comparatively liberal regime of Juddha Shamsher had genuinely assuaged his hostility.[43] Although very few of Sama's dramas lacked an element of moral didacticism, their main aim was to entertain an audience. Accordingly Mukunda-Indirā was written in plain, colloquial Nepali and its scenes were interspersed with musical interludes.[44]

Prahlāda, published in 1938, is probably Sama's most famous drama. Its central theme concerns the opposition of bhakti, religious devotion, to vijñān, Science and its moral values. Ingeniously, Sama retells the well-known story of the Vaiṣṇava saint Prahlāda's battle with a ferocious demon. In Sama's version, the demon takes the form of a scientist who has concocted a deadly poison which will destroy the world. Prahlāda, of course, is victorious in the end; he describes the difference between jñāna, Knowledge, and vijñāna, Science, in the following words:

> namarne hun udyoga jati vijñāna pardacha
> utti mardacha yo jñāna, khāli bheda cha yattimā-
> jñāna mardacha hāṃsera, roī vijñāna mardacha![45]

> "Science expends as much effort to dispel Death
> As true Knowledge does; both are failures,
> The only difference between them is this-
> Knowledge dies cheerfully, Science in lamentation."

Mukunda-Indirā and Prahlāda endorse a strange mixture of values; the first is explicit in its praise for patriotism and the unquestioning fidelity of wives, and the second, implicitly, urges a return to traditional religious values. Modern critics such as Tānāsarmā are lavish in their

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43. Tānāsarmā: Bhānubhaktadekhi Tesro Āyāmasamma, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1979, pp.32-47, discusses the moral philosophy expounded by Sama in Mukunda-Indirā.
44. Sama often appended songs to the texts of his plays.
45. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Prahlāda (Act 2, Scene 3), Kathmandu, 1938, p.61.

praise of the patriotic sentiments expressed in Mukunda-Indirā but cynical about the social conservatism which accompanies them.[46] The novelty of Prahlāda really lies in its treatment of a new topic: science is the weapon of the demon who opposes Viṣṇu. Thus Sama would appear to have laid aside the philosophy of revolution which caused the rejection of Amalekha by the Samiti. This may merely have been an act of pragmatism to ensure that his plays would reach their audience, or he may have genuinely changed his ideas. His autobiography makes no mention of these changes, as it does not continue beyond 1933, but his position as the chairman of the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti may well have been a factor.

Despite the apparent innocence of these plays, the Ranas remained quite suspicious of Sama. Mukunda-Indirā was first staged in 1937, before the Prime Minister, who allowed Sama to arrange public performances of the play later the same year. Prahlāda and Dhruva were staged in 1939,[47] but the principle of non-violent struggle against a tyrant demon which was espoused in the former play did not find favour among the rulers, either.

As a consequence, Sama's fifth play Andhavega ("Blind Impulse"), was prohibited, even though its performance had already been arranged.[48] The plot of Andhavega violated traditional norms of conduct, and dealt with themes such as adultery and suicide. Pamphā, the heroine, falls in love with her husband's cousin and completely neglects her duties as a Hindu wife. Eventually, Garuḍadhvaja, her husband, murders her lover and commits suicide. Although Sama does not endorse the behaviour of the heroine, much of the play is concerned with discussion of these issues and, despite the tragic ending which would seem to re-establish the righteousness of prevailing morality, the very treatment of these themes was a controversial act in itself.

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46. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1979, pp.32-47.
47. Baral, op.cit., 1974, p.192.
48. Ibid., p.192.

After 1940, Sama's plays were severely proscribed by the Government; it had been discovered that members of the banned Prajā Pariṣad had taken parts in performances of Prahlāda and Dhruva.[49] In 1940, this organisation was purged by the execution of many of its members and the life-imprisonment of others. The stated aims of the Pariṣad were the overthrow of the Ranas and the re-establishment of the direct authority of the king; it seemed axiomatic to the Rana government that Sama's plays had provided some of the inspiration for their subversive activities. It is difficult to assess the extent to which he was really involved with the Pariṣad. For the next few years, however, none of Sama's plays were staged in Nepal, and he was later imprisoned for several months, accused of subversive agitation.[50]

Sama's next drama, Bhakta Bhānubhakta, "Bhānubhakta the Devotee", was published in 1943; its plot was based on Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's biography of the Ādi Kavi which had been re-published in 1927.[51] Sama sought permission for its performance in 1944; it was hardly controversial, and the authorities do not seem to have had any objections to it. Some of the themes of Bhaṭṭa's biography were adapted slightly in order to make them more credible. For instance, Bhānubhakta's famous conversation with the grasscutter is greatly extended:

Bhānubhakta...napaḍheko bhae yati kurā kasarī jānyau ta? tyasto gīta kasarī gāyau?

Ṭhūle.....tapāi jasta eka dui janā bājele paḍheko sunera-lakṣmī bhaneko dhan, sarasvatī bhaneko vidyā, kāla bhaneko belā, hoina! arū ta pustakai paḍhnuparne kurā ke cha ra? maile yo saṃsārako bhane eka dui panti paḍheko chu-

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49. Ibid., p.193.
50. According to Pradhan (op.cit., 1980, p.71), Sama was imprisoned because he gave a speech denouncing the Ranas to a public meeting in Kathmandu.
51. Motīrām Bhaṭṭa: Kavi Bhānubhaktācāryyako Jīvan Caritra, Darjeeling, 1927. The first edition of this biography had been published by its author in 1891, but this new edition made it more widely available.

baliyo euṭa goṭhālo nirdho jastai bhaera gareko dekheko chu, dhanī euṭa khātrī garība jastai bhaera mareko dekheko chu, vidvān euṭa paṇḍita mūrkha jastai bhaera mareko dekheko chu. kharāba nāmle marisakeko mānisa pheri mareko dekheko chu asala nāmle marisakeko mānisa pheri bānceko pani dekheko chu. maile arū kehi paḍheko chaina.[52]

Bhānubhakta..."How did you learn so much without studying? How could you sing such a song?"

Ṭhūle....."I've heard a Brahman or two like yourself reading - Lakṣmī means wealth, Saraswatī means learning and Kāla means time, isn't that so! What else is there to learn from a book? I've learned a few lines in this worldly existence, though - I've seen a rough herdsman make himself weak and helpless, and a rich Khatri die like a pauper, and a scholarly pandit die like a fool. I've seen a man die who was already dead because of his bad reputation, and I've seen a dead man of repute saved at the last. I have studied nothing more."

Political tensions in Nepal due to the activities of the Nepali Congress and the increasing instability of the Rana regime led to an outright ban on dramatic performances in the late 1940s.[53] Once the political change of 1950 had run its course and the new Government had begun to espouse the cause of democratic reform, however, playwrights found themselves at liberty to stage their plays. Three of Sama's plays, Cintā "Anxiety" (1948), U Marekī Chaina "She Has Not Died" (1942), and Ma! "Me!" (1946), were not staged until much later and the first was never published.[54]

Sama was now at liberty to criticise the old regime, which he did with some relish. After his short spell in jail in 1947-48, he changed his name to Sama, "equal". This was probably an act which was intended to

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52. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Bhakta Bhānubhakta (Act 1, Scene 2), Kathmandu, 1943, pp.13-14.
53. Baral, op.cit., 1974, p.193.
54. Ibid., p.193.

indicate his approval of the new mood of democratic reform which pervaded Nepal at the time; it is also recorded[55] that he vowed never to touch the feet of a person of higher status in greeting, nor to address anyone with the honorific pronoun, hajur. His changing of his name may also have been part of the post-1950 trend of "Nepalising" Hindu names such as Varmā to Barmā or Śarmā to Sarmā.

Sama's first drama to be published after 1950 was Premapiṇḍa, "Love Sacrifice", an extremely long play of 68 scenes which had to be performed over a period of two days.[56] Premapiṇḍa depicted the moral laxity, decadence and corruption of the Ranas; in fact, the play's villain is said to have been based on the character of Sama's grandfather.[57] Another play in a similar vein was Tala Māthī, "Below and Above", published in 1959.

In addition to the new liberty for social criticism, the political changes seem to have created an atmosphere in which the moral stance of the playwright did not need to be as conservative as it had been before. One of Sama's later plays, Amita Vāsanā, "Unbounded Passion" (1970) idealises the love of a man for a woman who would have been adjudged a mere harlot by adherents to the old morality;[58] these changes, however, were by no means immediate. Sama was also pleased to be able to enact his favourite rôles on stage. In keeping with his staunch nationalist views, he continued to write plays based on the lives of Nepalese national heroes such as Amar Singh (Amarasingh 1953), Bhimsen Thāpā (Bhīmsenako Antya 1956) and Motīrām Bhaṭṭa (Motīrām 1970). The playwright himself frequently took the title rôles in these plays; previously, the idea of a Rana performing on stage with the duniyādāras, the common people, had been considered quite outrageous.[59]

In 1957, Bālakṛṣṇa Sama was appointed to the new Royal Nepal Academy (Rājakīya Prajñā Pratiṣṭhān) in recognition of his contribution to Nepali literature.[60] Although several new playwrights emerged in Nepal

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55. Pradhan, op.cit., 1980, p.72.
56. The first edition of Premapiṇḍa comprised three volumes, published between 1948 and 1952.
57. Pradhan, op.cit., 1980, p.56.
58. Ibid., p.60.
59. Sama made his stage debut in 1953. Baral, op.cit., 1974, p.193.
60. Ibid., p.189.

during his lifetime,[61] Sama was consistently regarded as the foremost exponent of his art. In this account of his career, more attention has been paid to his earliest works, which represent the emergence of his literary skills. Although Sama experimented with new metres, prose-poetry and prose, his basic approach to all writing was that of a verse-dramatist. This is evident from an examination of his poetry; it rarely lacks an element of drama, and dialogue is the form of expression in which his compositions attain their greatest fluency.

Sama's writings were never confined to the single genre of drama, nor did Sama limit his artistic activities to literature. He was also a painter of some repute and the author of a study of Nepalese arts.[62] Like many other Nepalese of the same generation, he was something of an habitual poet, composing verses throughout his life. Despite the great number of Sama's poems that were published in literary journals, a comprehensive collection has only recently emerged.[63] Similarly, some of his essays and short stories have been published in general digests of Nepali literature, but a great quantity of his prose compositions are still unavailable.

Sama's early experiments with khaṇḍa kāvya, however, did bear fruit in the shape of two long poetic works: Āgo ra Pānī, "Fire and Water" (1954) and Cīso Cūhlo "Cold Hearth" (1958). The first of these is a khaṇḍa kāvya of forty eight verses in which Sama attempts to document the history of mankind in terms of the struggle between evil, in the shape of fire, and good, in the shape of water. It was probably based upon an earlier philosophical prose composition entitled Niyamit Ākāsmikata ("Regulated Randomness") published in 1948, and is therefore an intellectual poem which occasionally seems over-contrived, but it was without doubt a significant new venture in Nepali literature. The first verse of this poem is a summary of its general theme;

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61. Notably, Bhīmanidhi Tivārī, whose best-known play is Sahanaśīl Suśīlā (1938), Gopālaprasād Rimāl, author of Masān (1946), and Hṛdayacandrasingh Pradhān (1915-1959).
62. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Nepālī Lalita-Kalā, Kathmandu, 1965. For an account of Sama's painting skills, see: Nārāyaṇa Bahādur Singh: Samasāmayik Nepālī Citrakalāko Itihās, Kathmandu, 1976, pp.168-171.
63. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Bālakṛṣṇa Samakā Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1981.

sunaulā āgo rupaulā pānī,
mānika philuṅgo ra hīrā hiuṃ,
yinko jhagaṛā ājako hoina:
yinkā vaimanasya ra bājha-bājh,
saṅgharṣana, luchācuṇḍi, juddha, cyātacyāta,
kāṭakāṭa ra māramāra saba
ananta hāṇḍīmā bhuṭiera phūla uṭhekā jammā jammai
tī tārāharū guḍinu bhandā
ananta kāla aghidekhiko...[64]

"Golden fire, silvery water,
ruby spark and diamond snow,
Their confrontation is now new,
their lack of concord and constant conflict,
struggling, tangling, warring, scrabble,
slaughter, murder - these all began in
endless ages past,
before those stars were fried and cooked
in an infinite frying-pan, and rolled into shape...."

Cīso Cūhlo is a mahākāvya, an epic poem of 360 pages of blank verse, interspersed with prose and Sanskrit metres. A tragedy, its theme is the love between a low caste damāi and a Chetrī girl. Although it no doubt contains much of great poetic quality, Cīso Cūhlo is rather over-extended by its great length, and one feels that Sama treats similar themes with great clarity in earlier dramas such as Mukunda-Indirā.

Poet, dramatist and social reformer, Sama died in the summer of 1981 and was greatly mourned by the Nepali literary world. A poet of the intellect rather than the emotions, his greatest achievements were his plays, which remain the classics of modern Nepali drama and are still often staged in the theatres of Kathmandu, and also in other towns where Nepalese reside, such as Darjeeling. At present, Nepali drama faces great competition from the cinema, and particularly from the popularity of the Hindi films which emanate in ever-increasing numbers from the studios of Bombay.

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64. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Āgo ra Pānī (verse 1), Kathmandu, 1954, pp.1-2.

Sama's poem Mṛtyupachiko Abhivyanjanā "Expression After Death"[65] was published in several journals after his death and is clearly regarded by many Nepalese as a fitting epitaph to the man, as well as a highly-regarded poem. In 1979, he wrote to Paras Mani Pradhan,

> "I feel I may write some more, I feel I may still do something ...the world is in a bad condition. What will support my writing. What write, indeed? Just for the sake of it? How momentary is it?"[66]

The last two lines of the fourth verse of his poem Icchā, however, probably express his dying wish:

> pāuṃ basna marera ākhīra gaī svargīya tyai lokamā
> nepālīharū chan marikana sabai pārī pugekā jahāṃ
>
> "When I die, may I go at last to inhabit that heavenly world
> Where the Nepalese have arrived, crossing over after dying."[67]

The plays of Bālakṛṣṇa Sama (in order of publication)[68]

	Composed	Published
Muṭuko Vyathā	1929	1929
Dhruva	1929	1929
Mukunda Indirā	1937	1937
Prahlād	1938	1938
Andhavega	1939	1939
Bhakta Bhānubhakta	1943	1943
Ma	1947	1947
Premapiṇḍa	1937?	1950?
Amarasingh	1953	1953
Bhīmasenako Antya	1955?	1955?
Talamāthī	1954	1966

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65. Bālakṛṣṇa Sama: Expression After Death, Kathmandu, 1972. This contains an English translation of this poem.
66. Prāṅgaṇa Sama Smṛti Aṅka, vol.3, nos.3-4, Kathmandu, 1981, p.13.
67. Ibid., p.19.
68. Collated from Pradhan (op.cit., 1980), pp.74-78, and from an article by Vāsudeva Tripāṭhī: "Bahumukhī Pratibhā Bālakṛṣṇa Sama", Vāṇmaya, vol.1, no.1, pp.56-62 (Kirtipur, 1980).

Amita Vāsanā	1970	1970
Tānsenako Jhari	1923	1970
Svāsnīmānche	1950	1976
Motīrām	1966	1976
U Marekī Chaina	1942	1978

(At least 9 plays remain unpublished)

One-Act Plays

Boksī	1942	
Bhatera	1953	
Tapobhūmī	1957	
Cāra Ekāṅkī	1963	(Vidyādhanaṃ Sarva Dhanapradhānaṃ, Nālāpānīmā, Ranadutalābha, Buhārtana)
Atyādhunikatā	1963	
Māṭoko Mamatā	1969	
Virāmi ra Kuruvā	1970	

(About 14 remain unpublished)

Short Stories

Parāighara	1935	Phukeko Bandhana	1938
Devarālī	1936	Harisiddhi	1940
Talatala	1936	Yauvana ra Sundaratā	1941
Khukurī	1937	Tāṅgana Ghoḍī	1949
Śaraṇa	1938	Rūpako Mūlya	1955
Kaikeyī	1938	Naulī	1962

Chapter 18

Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā (1909-1959)

Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā is generally considered to have been the most outstanding Nepali poet of this century, worthy of a place alongside the foremost literary figures of modern South Asia. Although it is not in itself an indication of the poet's stature, or of the quality of his work, the sheer volume of output which he sustained between 1934 and 1959 testifies to his total commitment to Nepali poetry. At least 41 books now bear his name, and some twenty more still await publication.[1] Devkoṭā is also the first Nepali poet to have attracted the attention of western scholars: a selection of his shorter poems were translated into English by David Rubin, an American lecturer in comparative literature, and published by Columbia University Press in 1980.[2]

Devkoṭā differed from his two most illustrious Nepali contemporaries in many respects. Like Bālakṛṣṇa Sama, he was greatly influenced by English literature, but it was the Romantic and Neo-Classical poets who attracted him the most, with their eloquent expression of emotions which he shared with them. The conventions of Sanskrit poetics which were such a profound influence on Lekhnāth are less discernible in much of Devkoṭā's poetry. In short, he was less intellectual and more spontaneous than Sama, less traditional and more experimental than Lekhnāth. In the introduction to his study of Devkoṭā's poetry, David Rubin expresses the opinion that, "In Devkota we see the entire Romantic era of Nepali literature".[3]

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1. Kumārabahādur Jośī: Mahākavi Devkoṭā ra unkā Mahākāvya, Kathmandu, 1974, p.345.
2. David Rubin: Nepali Visions, Nepali Dreams. The Poetry of Laxmiprasad Devkota, New York, 1980.
3. Ibid., p.5.

Early Life

Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, the third son of Til Mādhava Devkoṭā by his second wife, was born on the night of the Lakṣmī Pūjā festival, the 27th day of Kārtik, V.S. 1966 (November 1909)[4] and was named accordingly. As a young boy, he studied at home with his father, reading Sanskrit classics such as the Amara Kośa and the Raghuvaṃśa Mahākāvya of Kālidāsa,[5] along with studies in Nepali and English. Greatly influenced by his elderly father, who was himself a minor poet, Lakṣmīprasād's first poems were clearly imitative.

In 1921, at the age of eleven, Lakṣmīprasād was enrolled at the Darbar School. Til Mādhava had envisaged a traditional Brahmanical education for his son, but his mother and the rest of the family opposed the plan for his admission into the Rānī Pokharī Sanskrit Pāṭhśālā. His elder brother, Lekhnāth, had passed his matriculation examinations from Calcutta University in 1911, and had gone on to make his living teaching English. Lakṣmīprasād's mother wanted him to follow his brother's example.[6]

By the age of thirteen, Lakṣmīprasād had begun to dabble in English poetry and he was soon to become obsessed by the language. In 1925 he married Man Devī, a Chālise Brahman girl, and later the same year he received a first class pass in the Patna University matriculation examinations.[7] In 1926 he was enrolled at Trichandra College to study science, in which he achieved a second class I.Sc. in 1928.[8] His interest in literature increased greatly during these two years, and although he remained devoted to English, and was almost contemptuous of Nepali as a literary language,[9] he became familiar with Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl's early poems. Thus, he discontinued his scientific education and studied

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4. Paras Mani Pradhan: Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Deokota, Kalimpong, 1978, p.1.
5. Nityarāja Pāṇḍe: Mahākavi Devkoṭā, Lalitpur, 1960, p.122.
6. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.6.
7. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.122.
8. Ibid., p.123.
9. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.7.

for a B.A. in English, Maths and Economics, which he passed in 1930. Devkoṭā was the only recipient of a B.A. in the whole of Nepal that year.[10] His first child, a daughter named Sāvitrī, was born in 1928 and this added responsibility obliged him to spend much of his time teaching in order to supplement his meagre income.[11] Financial difficulties were to be a recurrent theme in his life.

In 1930 Devkoṭā, along with several other young intellectuals, put his name to a petition which demanded that the government establish a public library. All the petitioners were summarily arrested and given three-year jail sentences, which were suspended on payment of one hundred rupees per person.[12] This altercation was subsequently referred to as the "Library Incident" and it was Devkoṭā's first brush with the conservative Rana government, which he came to oppose quite bitterly. Strangely enough, the incident did not put him wholly out of favour with the authorities, for he was granted government sponsorship in 1931 to study law and English literature at Patna University.[13] He received his LL.B. in 1933 but his hopes of completing a Masters degree were dashed the following year, when both his parents died.[14] His first son, Prakāsh, was born in 1932 and so he could no longer afford to study. He returned to Kathmandu in 1934, and mourned his parents.[15]

Early Poems

Devkoṭā's first poem, entitled Purṇimāko Jaladhī, "The Ocean of the Full Moon", was published in the Gorkhāpatra in 1934 (Mārga 15, 1991).[16] It met with very little critical approval, apparently because it depended too much on alliteration and internal rhyme, and employed a large number of Hindi words.[17]

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10. Ibid., p.7.
11. Ibid., p.7.
12. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.123. The "Library Incident" is also described in: Leo E. Rose and Bhuwan L. Joshi: Democratic Innovations in Nepal, Berkeley, 1966, p.47.
13. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.124.
14. Ibid., p.124. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.8.
15. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.124.
16. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.28.
17. Ibid., p.28.

Even the most cursory reading of Devkoṭā's early poems reveals the great influence which English romanticism had over him at the time. He chose themes such as natural beauty, the "fundamental goodness of humble people"[18] and yearnings for the past which seem typically Wordsworthian in their tone and inspiration. The titles of these poems illustrate this tendency: Garīb, "The Poor Man", 1934,[19] Kisān, "The Farmer", 1938,[20] Bālakakāl, "Childhood", 1938[21] and so on. Others, such as Samjhanā, "Memory" are clearly intended to be sonnets, and poems such as Cāru (1940) and Tinko Ghaṃsiyā Gīta, "Her Reaping Song" were probably modelled on "Lucy Gray" and "The Solitary Reaper".[22] This latter poem, first published in 1935,[23] remains popular, for it has a musical and rhythmic appeal,

> cāla svatantra akelāpanako, khulā, ujyālo, beyāda
> phuldo yauvana hāṃsiraheko, pūrṇakalāmā pasdo cānda,
> chamachama curiharū krīṛā garchan, camacama haṃsiyā calcha charīta
> sundarījalamā, śītala thalamā, gāin tinale ghaṃsiyā gīta.[24]

"Her manner free, accustomed to solitude; open, bright and carefree,
Her young maturity blossoming cheerfully, like the moon as it waxes to fullness,
Her shiny bangles play, her light sickle moves rhythmically,
At Sundarijal in a cool place, she sang the Reaper's Song."

Munā Madan

Munā Madan, Devkoṭā's first book, was published by Brahma Shamsher J.B. Rana in Chait 1992 (1935)[25] and it was his most important work in several ways. It was the poet's personal favourite: on his deathbed in

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18. Ibid., p.8.
19. First published in Śāradā, vol.1, no.1 (1934) and later included in the collection entitled Bhikhārī (Kathmandu, 1953).
20. Śāradā, vol.4, no.1 (1938), also included in Bhikhārī.
21. Śāradā, vol.4, no.2 (1938), also included in Bhikhārī.
22. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.8.
23. Śāradā, vol.2, no.7 (1935).
24. Ishwar Baral (ed.): Himāl Culī, Darjeeling, 1970, p.136.
25. Jośī, op.cit., 1974, p.337.

1959, he made the famous statement that all his works might perish after his demise, but Munā Madan should be saved.[26] It is also one of the most popular episodic poems in Nepali literature, as is evident from the number of editions which have been published. Only two hundred copies were printed in 1935 but by 1972 Munā Madan had reached its twelfth edition.[27] The second edition to be published by Sājhā Prakāśan had a print-run of ten thousand copies.[28]

Munā Madan was a khaṇḍa kāvya which originally filled about forty pages,[29] and it represented quite a remarkable break with the literary past. The adoption of the jhyāure metre of Nepali folk songs for the composition was completely unprecedented and it accounted for much of the poem's appeal. In his introduction, Devkoṭā justified this novel move with an appeal to national feeling:

nepālī geḍā, nepālī dānā, nepālī rasale
bhijeko mīṭho rasilo gīta, nepālī kasale;
nepālī bhanne kasale tyasai ānkhā nai cimlelā;
pratibhābāṭa chahara chuṭe, hṛdaya nacholā?[30]

"Nepali seed and Nepali grain, the sweet juicy song
Watered with the flavour (rasa) of Nepal -
What Nepali would close his eyes to it?
If the fountain springs from the spirit
Will it not touch the heart?"[31]

Devkoṭā's predecessors had scorned the use of folk metres in verse, and Sanskrit conventions of kāvya still held sway among Nepali poets. Yet it was the musical, almost "sing-song" tone of its metre that earned Munā Madan much of its popularity[32] and the poem in turn established the jhyāure as one of the metres now claimed to be "native" to Nepal.

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26. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.6.
27. Ibid., p.33.
28. Published in Kathmandu in 1970.
29. The later, expanded version amounts to about fifty pages.
30. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Munā Madan, Kathmandu (2nd Sājhā edn.), 1970, facing p.1.
31. Translated with reference to Rubin (op.cit., 1980), p.33.
32. Ibid., p.33.

Munā Madan is essentially a narrative poem concerned with the perennial theme of viraha, the separation of the lover from the beloved. Madan, the hero, leaves his lover, Munā, in Kathmandu and goes to seek his fortune in Lhasa. He promises to return in all haste, but dallies over-long in the city and then falls ill on his way home. In Madan's absence, Munā receives the unwelcome attentions of a rival suitor, who eventually tells her that Madan has died. In fact, Madan is helped by a humble Tibetan and eventually he returns home, only to find that Munā has died of grief.[33]

The plot of Munā Madan can be compared to that of Bālakṛṣṇa Sama's Mukunda Indirā, but Devkoṭā's hero and heroine are more authentically human; their characters are not devised to portray ideals. Munā, for instance, is not immune to feelings of jealousy when Madan departs:

lhāsākī ṭhiṭī, āṅkhākī chiṭī, sunamā kundekī
bulbule bolī, gālāko bīca gulāpha phulekī
tī sabai khelun, ti sabai nācun ḍāṇḍā ra cahurmā
malāī birse yo āṃsu pirlā bhannechu ma ḍaramā[34]

"The maidens of Lhasa, with their glistening eyes and golden ornaments,
Their nightingale speech and cheeks as red as rose blossoms,
They'll all play, they'll all dance, on the hills and the pastures,
And I fear you will forget me and I will be pained by these tears."

and her faith in Madan's fidelity is shaken by her suitor's accusations. Munā is also contemptuous of Madan's desire for wealth, saying

hātakā mailā, sunakā thailā, ke garnu dhanale?
sāga ra sisnu khāeko besa ānandī manale[35]

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33. It is very likely that Devkoṭā borrowed the basic plot of his story from a Newari folksong. Dayārām Śreṣṭha: "'Munā-Madan' ko Srota tathā Preraṇā". Racanā, vol.14, no.4 (Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā-Aṅka), Kathmandu, 1976, pp.62-79.
34. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1970, p.4.
35. Ibid., p.3.

"Purses[36] of gold are like the dirt on your hands; what
can be done with wealth?
It's better to eat spinach and nettles with a happy heart."

Devkoṭā had never visited Lhasa, and so his description of the city must have been based on secondhand knowledge, as it is rather sketchy, merely enumerating the palaces and gardens and emphasising the quantities of gold which were supposed to be in evidence there. His descriptions of scenery with which he was somewhat more familiar are more evocative:

ḍāṇḍā ra kāṇḍā, ukālā ṭhāḍā, jaṅghāra hajāra,
bhoṭako bāṭo ḍhuṅgā ra māṭo nāṅgā ra ujāra,
kuiro ḍamma, hiuṃle ṭamma tyo viṣa phuleko;
simsime pānī, batāsa cīso barapha jhaiṃ ḍuleko[37]

"Mountains and rapids, steep and sheer, and thousands
of rivers to ford,
The road to Tibet; rocks and earth, naked and desolate,
A poisonous drizzling rain, full of mists and snow,
The wandering wind as cold as ice."

This verse demonstrates the internal rhymes and musical rhythm from which Munā Madan derives much of its charm. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to preserve these in translation.

Munā Madan was Devkoṭā's first major treatment of the theme of viraha and it served to bring him to the notice of other more established Nepali poets. It also presaged a series of similar poems such as Mhendu (published in 1958) and Lūnī (published in 1966), but the popularity of Munā Madan was never seriously challenged by any of Devkoṭā's subsequent works.

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36. thailā, 'purses' is translated by Rubin (op.cit., 1980, p.30) as 'plates', which seems incorrect. These lines are part of the most famous verse of Munā Madan, known by heart by many Nepalese.
37. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1970, p.7.

The 1940s

Feeling his education to be incomplete, Devkoṭā became increasingly anxious to complete his M.A. degree and in 1936 he made a visit to Calcutta to procure the necessary books.[38] His emotional state appears to have become a little unstable, due perhaps to a deep sense of frustration and dissatisfaction, and to the financial difficulties which plagued him. Thus from January to April 1939 he spent four months in a mental hospital in Ranchi (Bihar).[39] This disruption of his life failed to dampen his inspiration; indeed, his "illness" produced a famous poem, Pāgal, "Crazy", which was first published in 1953:[40]

jarūra sāthī! ma pāgala!
yastai cha mero hāla!

ma śabdalāī dekhdachu, dṛśyalāī sundachu, bāsnālāī svāda linchu;
ākāśabhandā pātalā kurālāī chunchu....
tī kurā jasako astitva loka māndaina,
jasako ākāra saṃsāra jāndaina[41]

"Certainly, my friend, I am crazy!
That's exactly what I am!

I see sounds, hear sights, taste smells,
I touch things thinner than air....[42]
Things whose existence the world denies,
Things whose shapes the world does not know."

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38. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.126.
39. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.7.
40. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.126) states that Devkoṭā wrote this poem in Ranchi, or shortly after his return to Kathmandu. It might have been written much later, however, as its style of blank verse and its publication date (Indrenī, vol.7, 1953) would suggest.
41. Churamani Bandhu (ed.): Sājhā Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1967, p.77.
42. Rubin (op.cit., 1980, p.148) translates this line: "I touch not heaven but things from the underworld", which suggests that he has misread pātalā, 'thin' or 'subtle' as patāla, 'the underworld'.

During the late 1930s, and especially after his return from Ranchi, Devkoṭā made several visits to the hills north of Kathmandu, travelling to Helambu and Gosainkund.[43] He was deeply affected by the beauty of the mountain scenery, and his Wordsworthian idealism responded to the simple life which the people of those regions spent. It is perhaps worth noting in passing that the literary world of modern Kathmandu remains largely insulated from the realities of Nepal, where illiteracy and poverty still prevail. Thus, life in the hills came as a revelation to Devkoṭā. His idealisation of the joys of the simple life was qualified by his recognition of the hardships which such a life entailed. These new opinions were later expressed in an essay entitled Pahāṛī Jīvan, "Mountain Life";

> "It occurred to me that I might settle down somewhere there. Even on my own, I could have done much to renew their lives, to bring them scholarship. I could have brought them reforms, and taught them about life. I could have illuminated the darkness of so many hearts, and learned so much myself. Desireless love and the joy of devotion mingled in this kind of self-dedication; perhaps I could have come close to the heart of mankind through this service, and spoken to the world with some measure of truthfulness."[44]

Devkoṭā's experiences of mountain life inspired several khaṇḍa kāvyas, such as Mhendu, Lūnī and Kunjinī. Again, these were romantic narratives of some considerable charm, in which the poet attempted to convey the appeal of pahāṛī folksongs. Indeed, the metres of Tamang songs were imitated in some verses of Mhendu, and Mhendu, the name of the heroine, is the Tamang word for 'flower'.[45]

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43. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.7.
44. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Lakṣmī Nibandhasaṅgraha, Kathmandu, 1945, p.10.
45. Ciranjīvī Datta: Kehī Nepālī Kāvyaharūko Samīkṣā, Kathmandu, 1973, p.41.

The first of two extremely productive periods of Devkoṭā's life began in 1943, when he was appointed as a writer and translator to the Nepālī Bhāṣānuvād Pariṣad. He was commissioned to translate important books and documents into Nepali, as well as being given a great deal of time to produce his own compositions.[46] He remained at this post for only three years, but made his first attempts at epic poetry, producing several major works within this short period, and a great number of shorter compositions. Several of these were not published until some twenty years later, so it is well-nigh impossible to establish a chronology for their composition.

Śākuntalā

Śākuntalā, also referred to as Nepālī Śākuntalā Mahākāvya, is an extremely long poem of 1754 verses, employing at least twenty different Sanskrit metres. It was written over a period of only three months in 1945,[47] and published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in the same year. This mahākāvya was based on the story of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta which was first told in the Mahābhārata and later elaborated by Kālīdāsa in the Abhijñāna Śakuntalā. No significant departures were made from the original plot, but Devkoṭā attempted to set it in a recognisably Nepalese idiom, explaining his intentions as follows,

> cintā dūra bhagāune, samaya nai svarṇābha pharkāune
> jñanīle pani gāune priyakathā ānanda barṣāune
> gāuṃ āja bhanī lieṃ kalamako vīṇā yaso hātamā[48]
>
> "It chases worry far away and turns time itself back into gold,
> It is the beloved story which the sages sang, and it showers
> us with joy,
> Thus I have picked up this lute, my pen, to sing it today."

Śākuntalā contrasts strongly with Munā Madan in both its language and its general style. Devkoṭā chose to adopt a great deal of obscure

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46. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.127.
47. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.10.
48. Jośī, op.cit., 1974, pp.203-204.

vocabulary from Sanskrit and so some passages are not readily intelligible, even to an educated native speaker.[49] Much of Devkoṭā's work suffers from similar flaws; once a poem was completed, the poet embarked on his next composition, often without editing or revision.[50] Kumārabahādur Jośī remarks that this epic poem, with its Sanskritised diction, represents the "second poetic personality" of Devkoṭā.[51]

Some of the verses of Śākuntalā seem to be rather abstruse allegories. The opening maṅgalācaraṇa invokes Śiva, but also forms a summary of the whole story;

cimlī locana dīrghakāla tapamā kholera vasantikā
nācdi sundara tālale pavanamā dekhī phulekī latā
birse jhaiṃ 'bhana ko timī' yati bhanī gaurī rulāīkana
muskāera phulyāunda śiva diūn kalyāṇako cumbana[52]

"Opening the eyes of Spring, which had long been closed in meditation,
Seeing the flowering vine, which danced a pleasing rhythm in the breeze,
Saying, "Tell me, who are you?" as if forgetful, and making Gaurī cry,
May Śiva, smiling and expansive, give the kiss of well-being."[53]

The advent of Spring would seem to represent the coming of Duṣyanta to Śakuntalā, the weeping of Gaurī symbolises the lovers' separation and the kiss their reunion.[54] Such allegories are common throughout the poem, but other verses are composed in simple Nepali, as is the following description of Śakuntalā's beauty:

jūnai jūnaibāṭa māno kundekī
phūlai phūlaibāṭa māno banekī

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49. Ibid., p.202.
50. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.4.
51. Jośī, op.cit., 1974, p.202.
52. Ibid., p.190.
53. For a rendering of this verse which is less literal but more elegant, see Rubin (op.cit., 1980), p.41.
54. Jośī, op.cit., 1974, p.191.

rātā gālā dīrgha āṅkhā ujyālā
viśvaśrī jhaiṃ prātamā cāru cālā[55]

"As if carved from the moon itself,
And made of nothing but flowers,
Pink-cheeked, her long eyes bright,
Like Viśvaśrī, her auspicious departure beautiful in
the dawn."

Sulocanā

Sulocanā was Devkoṭā's second mahākāvya and in many respects it was also his most extraordinary. It was written in the space of a mere three days, reputedly because Devkoṭā had been challenged to prove that he was an āśukavi, a "poet extempore",[56] and it was published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti in 1946. The epic fills over three hundred pages and is divided into fifteen cantos (sarga). Although essentially a romantic melodrama, Sulocanā differs quite radically from anything which precedes it in Nepali literature. The whole story is set in Kathmandu during the 1930s; references are made to 20th-century historical events[57] and Devkoṭā goes to some lengths to include social details such as dress, eating habits and the locations in Kathmandu of the main characters' homes. An important innovation was the inclusion of pseudo-psychological explanations for the characters' actions, a device which was new to Nepali poetry, and which lent depth and credibility to the whole story. The poem is interpreted as a thinly-veiled criticism of Nepalese social conventions; an unorthodox morality is implicitly sanctioned and many characters are at least partially allegorical. The plot also departs from the norms of viyoga melodrama, in so far as its ending is tragic, and the lovers are never re-united. At least one Nepali critic is dubious of its classification as a mahākāvya, suggesting that it might be more accurately described as a "verse novel"[58] and Devkoṭā himself admits as much in his introduction.[59]

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55. Śākuntalā, 7th canto, verse 51. Quoted in ibid, pp.205-206.
56. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.11.
57. Such as the First World War. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.46.
58. "padyātmak upanyās". Dayārām Śreṣṭha Sambhava: Nepālī Sāhityakā Kehī Pṛṣṭha, Kathmandu, 1975, p.127.
59. "Perhaps I have become a poetic dramatist or a verse-novelist. Can a

(Contd. on next page.....)

The first two cantos of Sulocanā introduce the main story; the first is an invocation of various deities and the second relates the details of the heroine, Sulocanā's family. Some parts of this family history resemble Devkoṭā's own, especially the verses which describe the family's move to Devakuṭ, which is described as an earthly paradise:

jahāṃ sānjha uṣā dherai verasamman basīkana
hiuṇkā ṭākurābāṭa sunaulā viśva herdachan....

...jahāṃ malayabhandā cha mīṭho śvāsa aharnisa
vasanta pani jāndaina jhuldai bascha pahāḍamā
carāko kaṇṭha mantrera indreṇī vanamā ūñcā[60]

"Where the sun lingers long in the dusk
And regards the golden world from a snowy peak....

Where the air is more fragrant than the Malaya breeze,[61]
by day and by night,
Even Spring does not depart, but swings from the hills,
A rainbow in the high forests, charming the throats of birds."

The story of Sulocanā begins in the third canto, which is preceded by an introduction to the members of her family:

caṇḍamardana jeṭhā chan kānchā timiramardana
sulocanā nāmakī chan chorī nepāla-bhūṣaṇa
dui bhāi milī paṛhchan aṅgrejī ati cākhale
bī.e. pāsa hune sāla yahī nabbe ra pāñca ho[62]

"Caṇḍamardan the elder son, and Timirmardan the younger
And a daughter named Sulocanā, the ornament of Nepal;
The two brothers study English together with enthusiasm
And will pass their B.A. this very year of '95."

(.....contd. from previous page)
novel not be written in verse? Perhaps if a poem and a novel are combined, the qualities of both can be enjoyed." Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Sulocanā, Kathmandu, 1946, p.2.

60. Ibid., p.29, (2nd canto, verses 64, 65).
61. A breeze which is scented with sandalwood, said to blow from the Malaya mountain in South India; its fragrance is proverbial.
62. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1946, p.41 (2nd canto, verse 125).

These details of modern Nepalese life and education had never before been included in serious poetry, and the use of classical Sanskrit metres such as śārdūlavikrīḍita and anuṣṭubha to convey such information must have seemed most unorthodox to a pandit.[63]

The first part of the story tells of the love affair between Anaṅga, the son of Brahman and Kṣatriya parents, and Sulocanā. They are childhood friends until their fathers fall out over a dice game, but they meet again when Anaṅga becomes friendly with Sulocanā's brothers. Soon, there is a fierce debate concerning the existence of God: Anaṅga and Sulocanā believe in the existence of God, while Sulocanā's brothers refute the idea. Again, this is an extremely unusual subject for a Nepali poem of the period. Eventually, Anaṅga is thrown out by the brothers, and Sulocanā is later betrothed to Vilās Singh, an old and ugly man. Before her marriage, she makes her plea:

eka nai paṭaka phulcha gulāpha
pāundā kiraṇako mṛdu rāpa
kopilā kusuma hunna pachāṛi
kāla jhārcha baru viśvaagāṛi

huncha eka muṭu nai sabalāī
kholcha eka ravile dinalāī
eka candra rajanikana rājā
eka mūrti nita bandacha tājā[64]

"The rose blooms only once,
With the sunbeam's gentle warmth,
The blossom cannot become a bud again,
For Time shakes it down before the world.

Everyone has only one heart,
Only one sun opens the day,
Only one moon is the ruler of the night,
Only one image stays fresh forever."

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63. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.46.
64. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1946, pp.142-3 (7th canto, verses 57, 58).

Her protest, which is one of Devkoṭā's most famous compositions, goes unheeded; she is married to Vilās Singh, and her plans to elope with Anaṅga are ruined by an attack of smallpox. Rejected by her husband, who soon takes a second wife, Sulocanā becomes friendly with Bijulī, a widowed sister-in-law who refuses to play the submissive rôle of the Hindu widow. She explains to Sulocanā that she intends to enjoy her widowhood:

vidhavā tī thiin bhanthin 'mero pani yahāṃ haka
baiṃsako jindagīko cha! malāi pani ke dhaka?'

rāmro sundara baiṃsālu yuvā dekhera netrale
iśārā dinu nai hāmro' tinī 'prakṛti' bhandathin[65]

"She was a widow who said 'I also have rights here,
The right to the life of youth! What is there to stop me?"

"When I see a fine good-looking young fellow,
I signal with my eyes"; this she called her 'nature'."

Bijulī is soon found to be pregnant by one of the house-servants, and is sent away in disgrace. Later she meets Timirmardan, and they fall in love. Again, Devkoṭā has departed from the accepted norms of Nepali poetry in his treatment of a morality which would normally be a subject for censure.

Meanwhile, Sulocanā becomes a tragic figure, who immerses herself in devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Her brother, Timirmardan, points out to us that this is merely a sublimation of her sexual frustration;[66] it would seem that Devkoṭā had been impressed by the theories of Sigmund Freud, and these ideas were again new to Nepali literature. Sulocanā's only consolation is the servant who builds her a shrine for Kṛṣṇa and plays the flute to her. She is unaware of the fact that this servant is

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65. Ibid., p.193 (9th canto, verses 102, 103).
66. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.48.

really Anaṅga in disguise.

Finally, Sulocanā's relationship with her husband reaches a crisis when he discovers a letter which she has written to Anaṅga: he beats her and orders her out of the house. The servant (Anaṅga) intercedes, telling Vilās Singh about their love affair; as soon as Sulocanā recognises him, he disappears. Vilās Singh, stricken with guilt, shoots himself. The poem ends in great tragedy, as Sulocanā dies of consumption at the temple of Pashupati. As she passes away, a stranger appears:

taba yahāṃ dina eka kunai jana
na ṛṣi bhannu na pāgala bhannu jhaiṃ
vasana jīrṇa dharīkana āuncha
najara tī mukhamā tyasako parī[67]

"Then one day came some person,
Who seemed neither sage nor madman,
Wearing worn-out clothes he came,
All eyes were on his face."

It is only after he has gone that people realise that the stranger was Anaṅga, in his final disguise.

As noted above, this ending of "tragic irreconcilability"[68] is a major departure from the traditions of epic poetry, which David Rubin describes as "characteristically modern".[69] In an authoritative analysis of the poem, he remarks:

"If at moments the melodramatic climaxes....seem to clash with the naturalistic and psychological tone, it should be remembered that Devkota is not part of a Western tradition (no matter how important the influence of the West on his work may be), nor, for that matter, is there any clear Indic tradition behind his work in this form....he is....creating quite new vehicles for the expression of his thought."[70]

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67. Devkoṭā, op.cit., 1946, p.312 (15th canto, verse 61).
68. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.51.
69. Ibid., p.51.
70. Ibid., p.49.

The whole work is also quite clearly allegorical, and critical of many social conventions, such as arranged marriage, the status of widows and women in general and the pride and hypocrisy of the Ranas and the upper castes. Sulocanā's father, for instance, is named Śatru, "the enemy" and the long genealogical preamble serves to emphasise the excessive pride which he holds in his family, a pride which does not coincide with the family's status in Kathmandu society. This feature of the epic is now regarded as an implicit criticism of the power of the Rana family. Throughout the poem, Devkoṭā attempts to promote his ideals of honesty, freedom and the spontaneity of human love; it is significant that the love affair of Timirmardan and Bijulī is successful, although highly unorthodox. Sulocanā was perhaps the fullest and most eloquent expression Devkoṭā ever made of his personal philosophy in epic poetry and it is a landmark in the development of modern Nepali literature.

Between 1943 and 1946, Devkoṭā submitted about twenty-two manuscripts for publication.[71] Many were not published until after the establishment of Sājhā Prakāśan in 1964: these included three episodic poems (Sītāharaṇa, Duṣyanta-Śakuntalābheṭa and Lūnī), two epics (Vana-Kusum and Mahārāṇā Pratāp), a novel (Campā) a verse-drama (Kṛṣi-Bāla) a collection of songs (Gāine Gīta) and two volumes of poems for children (Putalī). Several more still await publication.[72]

Despite his predilection for poetry, Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā also wrote several short stories, a novel and a number of essays of exceptionally high quality. His first published prose[73] appeared in Śāradā in 1936, and a collection of essays was published in 1945, entitled Lakṣmī Nibandhasaṅgraha, which is perhaps the best source-material for an analysis of the poet's highly individual philosophies.

Exile in Banaras

In 1947, Devkoṭā accepted a teaching post at Trichandra College

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71. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.10.
72. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.127.
73. This was an essay, entitled Asāṛhko Pandraha, "The Fifteenth Day of Asāṛh", in Śāradā, vol.2, no.9 (1936).

but the following year, only a few days after he had chaired the first meeting of the Nepālī Sāhitya Pariṣad, he left Nepal surreptitiously to become a voluntary exile in Banaras.[74] It seems that he could no longer tolerate the overbearing censorship of his works. Two poems published in Śāradā in 1946 indicate that he was becoming increasingly discontent with the state of affairs which prevailed in Nepal under the Rana regime. In Sāṇḍhe, "The Bull",[75] the obstinate bull sitting in the middle of the street is clearly meant to represent the Ranas. He claims to be older and greater than the Vedas, he takes possession of every field he enters (jati pasna sakyo uti āphno kheta) and his heaven is a lascivious delight (svarga bhaneko ugrāi).[76] In Bāghale Baccā Kina Khāncha? "Why Does the Tiger Eat its Young",[77] Devkoṭā comes close to urging revolution:

> e lau, bāghako choro hosbhane tyo hāttīlāī hānk,
> athavā ā maisaṅga laṛ, dekhūṃ tero dhāk![78]
>
> "If you are the son of a tiger, chase away that elephant,
> Or come with me and fight, and let me see your valour."

Devkoṭā is said to have been somewhat less attuned to the social and political developments of his time than some of his contemporaries.[79] The tone of his poetry had always been affected profoundly by his personal fortunes, but during his exile in Banaras he began to express his opposition to the anachronistic feudalism which still prevailed in Nepal. This revolutionary spirit was expressed more explicitly in the many poems which were published in the various Nepali journals of the late 1940s than in the epics and episodic poems. Many of these poems were composed in a form of blank verse known as gadya-kavitā, "prose-poetry". Devkoṭā found that the absence of metrical restrictions allowed him greater spontaneity and flow (pravāha), qualities for which he strove in his poetry.[80] Gadya-kavitā was first made popular by "revolutionary poets"

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74. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.128.
75. Śāradā, vol.12, nos.11/12 (1946).
76. Tārāprasād Jośi (ed.): Nepālī Kavitā Saṅgraha, Kathmandu, 1973, vol.2, pp.45-47.
77. First published in Śāradā, vol.12, nos.11/12 (1946).
78. Bandhu (ed.), op.cit., 1967, p.74.
79. Abhi Subedī: Sirjanā ra Mūlyāṅkan, Lalitpur, 1981, p.73.
80. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.9.

in the early 1940s, such as Gopālaprasād Rimāl.[81]

In Banaras, Devkoṭā attended meetings of the outlawed Nepali Congress, and edited Yugavāṇī, a revolutionary journal. Desperately short of money, he composed as many as ten poems every day, which he submitted to the head of the Nepālī Saubhāgya Pustakālaya for publication.[82] Much of this, exemplified by 52 sonnets which he wrote in English on the death of Mahatma Gandhi, was simply "hack" work,[83] but Devkoṭā still found time to produce an enormous quantity of poetry of a very high quality. Much of his work appeared in journals, and has not been included in later publications. Pahāṛī Pukār was a long revolutionary poem which Devkoṭā published as a pamphlet in 1948:

anna ra bastra ghara lii chāṛchauṃ
insāphako nāuṃmā
jyānaipo jāos, prāṇai po jāos
parvāha gardainauṃ
mānisalāi cāhine eka
nalii chāṛdainauṃ!
marnu ta ekadina avasyai parcha,
paśu jhaiṃ na jiuṃ
mānisa huṃ bhane, mānisa jhaiṃ jiuṃ,
mānisako haka liuṃ![84]

"We leave our food, our clothes and our homes behind
For the sake of justice.
Even if we lose our lives, our very breath
We are unconcerned,
There is one thing a man requires
Which we have never had, and cannot leave behind!
For sure I'll have to die one day,
But I will not live like an animal,

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81. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, pp.100-104.
82. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.12.
83. Ibid., p.12.
84. Quoted by Govinda Bhaṭṭa in: Bhānu (vol.5, no.12) Devkoṭā Viśeṣāṅka, (1968), p.346.

If I am human, I shall live like a human,
Asserting the rights of humanity!"

Devkoṭā's poems from this period of exile include four khaṇḍakāvya: Navarasa ("The Nine Sentiments"), Māyāvinī Sarsī ("Circe the Enchantress"), Mainā and Sundarī Projarpinā ("The Fair Prosperina"), a lyric poem, Vasantī and the poems which are now included in collections entitled Bhāvanāgāṅgeya ("The Ganges of Emotion") and Ākāśa Bolcha ("The Sky Speaks"). Vasantī and Mainā were purely Nepali poems, which harked back to the earlier romances, but three major works of this period of Devkoṭā's life attest to his growing fascination with Greek mythology. These were Māyāvinī Sarsī, published in 1967, Sundarī Projarpina, published in 1952, and his last and most ambitious epic poem, Pramithas, "Prometheus", which was written in 1950-1951 but was not published until 1971.

Pramithas is an unusual poem by any standards. Devkoṭā had retold the story of Śakuntalā in a Nepali idiom, perhaps emulating Bhānubhakta in his reworking of a classical Sanskrit theme, but Pramithas is quite different. Except for the revolutionary stance which is adopted in some verses, no attempt is made to "Nepalise" the story. Its basic plot remains largely unaltered, and Sanskrit vocabulary and Vedic names are utilised to effect a kind of synthesis of Hellenic and Indian mythology.[85] The following extract illustrates the political overtones which occasionally enter the speeches uttered by Prometheus:

he rankaho, cina rājā āphaibhitra. bana bāgī -
bāgī tyasa viruddha jo timro ho mahākāla.
he sṛṣṭa viśvakā uttarādhikārīharūho,
adhikāranimitta laḍa āphnā, niḍara, amara,
andhyārāmā chau timīharū ajha mānavaho,
chau ajha lākhauṃ bhramakā śikāra, laṭamukhā,
kuirakā kāka, timro jātīya gaganamā
ḍālna nayāṃ prakāśa, baḍhārna kuiro ākāśako,

85. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.145.

nava janma dina timro jātilāī bahumūlya
avatarita chu pṛthivīmā, ma amara pramithasa,
bhayankara bāgī svargako....[86]

"Wretches, recognise the king within yourselves. Rebel!
Rebel against that which consumes you.
Heirs to the created world!
Fight for your inheritance, fearlessly and forever.
Still you remain in darkness, Man,
The prey of myriad delusions, dumb crows in the mist,
I have come to set new light in the firmament of your species,
To sweep the mists from the skies,
To give precious rebirth to your race.
I, Prometheus the immortal, am incarnate on Earth,
A fearsome rebel from Heaven...."

In 1947, Devkoṭā's second son died of typhoid and Man Devī and Prakāsh joined him in Banaras the following year. In the autumn of 1949, they returned together to their home in Kathmandu and Devkoṭā continued his struggle for a livelihood.[87] Frustrated that his writings had never brought him any significant material benefits, he wrote (in English):

"The writer finds that the pen cannot pay for his daily bread. His popularity, if he is one of the popular writers, is confined within very narrow limits.... Literary creations are unremunerative luxuries of self-intoxication imaginatively indulged in for the pleasure of the shortlived creative hour."[88]

He was obliged to take up a number of temporary teaching posts in Kathmandu, sometimes spending as much as fifteen hours a day on his work.[89] Depressed by these problems, his emotional and physical health declined, but his productivity hardly diminished. Even when he was virtually

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86. Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Pramithas, Kathmandu, 1971, p.68.
87. Pāṇḍe, op.cit., 1960, p.129.
88. Laxmi Prasad Devkota: "The literature we should produce". Literature, vol.1, no.1, Kathmandu, 1981, p.2.
89. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.14.

suicidal after the death of his son Prakāsh in 1952, he arranged for the publication of his earlier poems in collections such as Putalī (1952) and Bhikhārī (1953). He also edited a short-lived journal, Indrenī, in which many of his later poems were published.[90] These were often optimistic, despite his sorrows, as the following extract from Indrenī, "Rainbow", illustrates:

bhana, kina ho e! jhalkeko?
svarga ra pṛthvī ṭūṭa,
sura-nara-phūṭa,
jorna timī chau
palkeko?

boksī battī : sphuṭita kiraṇakī
raṅgilī bandha!
ghana jalakaṇa saba hunchan pataṅga!
jvalana cha tinako
caramānanda!

marna sikāū bādalalāī
balidānī!
phurna sikāū bhū-lāī he
indrenī![91]

"Tell me, why do you shine?
Are you tempted to re-unite
Heaven and earth which have broken apart
Or man with the gods he has lost?

A witch's lamp: a colourful prism of scattered rays,
The dark droplets all moths,
Their burning is their final joy.

Teach the clouds to die,
Self-Sacrificer!
Teach the earth to thrill with delight,
Rainbow."

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90. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.13. Seven issues of Indrenī were published.
91. Royal Nepal Academy: Ādhunik Nepālī Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1971, pp.85-86.

In his later years, Devkoṭā came to re-evaluate his poetry and its language. In an essay which he wrote in English, he compared the language of modern Nepali poetry with that of Bhānubhakta and found the former lacking:

> "(Bhānubhakta's diction) is easy, natural, almost colloquial, explanatory and yet appealing.... (The modern poets' language) is difficult, artificialised, Sanskrit-dominated... jaw-breaking gibberish for the common man.... We have lost sight of the healthier side of the genius of our language."[92]

He goes on to urge for a greater simplicity of language,

> "From the standpoint of social or natural utility, we practice wastage. And I know that I have been guiltier than the rest of us in this respect. The claims of democracy are forgotten. The ivory tower is the ideal. Our social and political contexts demand a revision in spirit, and in style. We must speak to our times."[93]

Accordingly, Devkoṭā's poems of the late 1950s are written in a simpler language; some obscurities persist, but his use of abstruse Sanskrit words decreases. On occasion, English words are borrowed, such as "evening" and "machine" in Eka Sundarī Veśyāprati ("To a Beautiful Prostitute"), which was published in 1956.[94] Towards the end of his life, Devkoṭā wrote many poems in English, and also translated some of his Nepali compositions, making alterations here and there.[95] The following verse was composed during his final illness,

> "Promethean pain I bear,
> With tear on tear,
> Yet a song of joy must I raise,
> My God to praise."[96]

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92. Devkoṭā, in Literature, vol.1, no.1 (1981), p.2.
93. Ibid., p.3.
94. Indrenī, vol.1, no.5 (1956).
95. Some of these English translations are included in the Royal Nepal Academy's Modern Nepali Poems, Kathmandu, 1972.
96. Quoted by Pāṇḍe, (op.cit., 1960), p.59.

Devkoṭā was active on various committees after the political changes of 1950 and in 1957 he was made a member of the newly-founded Royal Nepal Academy.[97] He was the Minister for Education in Ṭankā Prasād Ācārya's short-lived administration in 1957, and also under K.I. Singh.[98] As a prominent Nepali poet, he was also chosen to lead Nepalese delegations to Indian literary conferences on numerous occasions and he attended similar functions in the Soviet Union, Peking and Bucharest.[99] His medical condition, first diagnosed as a peptic ulcer, later as cancer, deteriorated steadily but during his convalescence from an operation in Calcutta in 1958 he wrote the humorous poems which were published as a collection entitled Manoranjana, "Enjoyments" and also revised his beloved Munā Madan.[100]

Devkoṭā travelled to Tashkent in 1958 to attend the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference, but he required a large blood transfusion before delivering a lengthy speech on Nepali literature.[101] He subsequently spent nearly a month in a Moscow hospital and, shortly after his return to Nepal he was admitted to Shānta Bhavan hospital in Patan. It was clear that he was dying; on his sickbed he wrote:

dhanya he ātmā dhanya he īśvara timro līlā bujhiena
timro padamā sāthasmṛti lī āṃha kahilyai bhijiena
aba yasalāī kehī chaina gayo kahāyo pugyo kahāṃ
kevala viṣako thopā piundai ajha jaldaicha basī yahāṃ[102]

"Blessed be the soul and blessed be the Lord; I never
understood your game,
My sighs of sad remembrance never dampened your feet,
Where will he go, where will he be summoned, where will
he arrive - this man no longer cares,
Drinking drops of poison, still he stays here burning."

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97. Ibid., p.132.
98. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.14, p.17.
99. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, p.14.
100. Pradhan, op.cit., 1979, p.17.
101. Pradhan (ibid., p.18) states that some of Devkoṭā's poems were later published in Russian translation.
102. Quoted by Pāṇḍe (op.cit., 1960), p.56.

Devkoṭā's death was almost a public event. His medical expenses had been defrayed by members of the royal family, and as he waited for death at the temple of Paśupatināth, he was visited by many of the most prominent citizens of Kathmandu, including Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl.[103] He is now honoured as the mahākavi, the "great poet" of Nepali literature and takes his place in the literary "trinity" of Sama, Pauḍyāl and Devkoṭā.

Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā: Published Works

Devkoṭā's prolific creativity caused numerous problems for the literary biographer. Some works were not published until many years after their composition and new poems are still coming to light. Many of these were originally published in the literary journals of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Śāradā, Yugavāṇī and Indrenī and are not included in the published collections. In the following bibliography,[105] Devkoṭā's published works are arranged as far as possible in order of composition.

Date of composition	Title	Date of publication	Description
1935	Munā Madan	1935	Khaṇḍakāvya
1940	Sāvitrī Satyavān	1940	Verse-drama
1940	Rājakumār Prabhākar	1940	Khaṇḍakāvya
1941	Prasiddh Prabandh Saṅgraha	1941	Translated essays
1942	"Big Game Shooting in Nepal"	1942	
pre-1945	Bhikhārī	1953	Poems
1943-1946	Putalī	1952	Children's poems
	Mhendu	1958	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Kṛṣibālā	1964	Verse-drama
	Gāine Gīt	1967	Songs
	Sītāharaṇa	1967	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Campā	1967	Novel
	Duṣyanta-Śakuntalābheṭa	1968	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Van-Kusum	1968	Epic poem

103. Rubin, op.cit., 1980, pp.14-16.
104. Ibid., p.17.
105. Based on the appendix of Pāṇḍe's study (op.cit., 1960, pp.337-344).

Date of composition	Title	Date of publication	description
1944	Lūnī	1966	Khaṇḍakāvya
1945	Śākuntalā	1945	Epic poem
	Lakṣmī Nibandhasaṅgraha	1945	Essays
	Kuñjinī	1945	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Rājapūtaramaṇī	1945	Drama
1946	Sulocanā	1946	Epic poem
1946	Mahārāṇā Pratāp	1967	Epic poem
1947	Rāvaṇa-Jaṭāyu Yuddha	1958	Khaṇḍakāvya
1948	Pahāṛī Pukār	1948	jhyāure poem
1947-1949	Navarasa	1968	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Bhāvanāgāṅgeya	1967	Poems
	Māyāvinī Sarsī	1967	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Ākāśa Bolcha	1968	Poems
1949	Vasantī	1952	Lyric poem
	Mainā	1952	Khaṇḍakāvya
	Sundarī Projarpinā	1952	Khaṇḍakāvya
1951	Pramithas	1971	Epic poem
1953	Sunako Bihāna	1953	Children's poems
1958	Manoranjana	1967	Humorous poems
1958	Janmotsava Muṭuko Thopā	1958	Poems
1959	Chaharā	1959	Poems
1959	Mṛtyuśayyabāṭa	1959	Poems
?	Cillā pātaharū	1964	Poems
?	Kaṭak	1969	Heroic verse
?	Chāṅgāsaṅga kurā	1969	Poems
?	Myākbeth	1969	Drama (trans.)

Chapter 19

Modern Nepali Literature

In this account of the history of Nepali literature, attention has inevitably been focussed on the development of poetry and, to a lesser extent, of drama. It has been noted that poetry has always been the dominant genre of Nepali literature, and that most Nepali writers have considered themselves to be, first and foremost, poets. Thus the composition of prose was generally a subsidiary activity for the Nepali poet until quite late in the 20th century and as we have seen, this was explicable partly in terms of the lack of grammatical standardisation in the Nepali language itself. Variant spellings or unorthodox syntax in verse can be justified by "poetic license" but a more regularised language is required for prose composition. Thus it is no coincidence that essays, academic studies and fiction were not produced in any quantity in Nepali until grammatical norms were established in the 1920s.[1]

Fiction

The development of Nepali fiction during the early years of the 20th century closely resembled that of Nepali poetry over the same period. The didactic, miraculous and romantic fables of the late 19th century had been wholly displaced by a school of "social realism"[2] by the mid-20th century. To some extent, this style of Nepali fiction has now been superceded by the works of new authors who are deeply influenced by existentialist philosophies and a sense of social alienation.

Although Nepali scholars are eager to seek out antecedents for the Nepali novel and short story in their own literary history, few would deny that the most important influence on Nepali fiction has been that of

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1. Gumānsingh Cāmling: Maulo, Darjeeling, 1978, pp.59-60.
2. "sāmājik yathārthavād".

European literature. One critic states, "one should not hesitate to seek for the roots of Nepali fiction outside Eastern literatures"[3] and the same commentator also believes that the Nepali novel is "a contribution of capitalist civilisation".[4] It can indeed be argued that Nepali fiction was the product of an era during which literary commercialism was established with the development of a small publishing industry and the emergence of a growing market for literature as the educated sector of Nepalese society expanded.

In the late 19th century, tales from Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu literatures were popular in Nepal and the style and content of the Nepali fiction of that time were clearly imitative of these stories. Some Nepali scholars still attempt to present works such as Bhānudatta's translation of Hitopadeśa Mitralābha (1776), Sundarānand Bāṇḍā's Triratna Saundarya Gāthā (1832) or the Tīn Āhān ("Three Fables", c.1820) by "Munshi" as the beginnings of an indigenous tradition of fiction,[5] but it is clear that 20th-century Nepali fiction has only the most tenuous of links with these works. The first works of Nepali fiction were greatly influenced by romantic Sanskrit legends and Urdu and Persian miracle and jāsūsī stories. These latter are often described as "detective stories" but are more accurately described as stories which are concerned with the solution of a mystery invented by their author. The very beginnings of modern Nepali fiction are represented by works such as Bīrasikkā (a collection of royal romances derived from Persian literature), Baitāl Paccīsī (traditional Indian legends) and a romance based on a theme from the Purāṇas , Mahāsati Anusūyā, all of which were first published between 1895 and 1915.[6]

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3. Kṛṣṇacandrasingh Pradhān: "Nepālī Upanyās" in Pradhān (ed.): Sājhā Samālocanā, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, p.358.
4. Ibid., p.359.
5. Mohanarāja Śarmā traces the origins of Nepali fiction back to the Vedas in Kathāko Vikās-Prakriya, Kathmandu, 1978.
6. The popularity of these works continued well into the 20th century, as is evident from the number of editions published in the 1920s and 1930s. M.J.Hutt: A Catalogue of Nepali Printed Books in the India Office Library (to be published in 1984).

The Novel

The first Nepali writer to merit the title of "novelist" was one Sadāśiva Śarmā, whose Mahendraprabhā was published in 1902.[7] Śarmā wrote five novels in all, if his translations of two Hindi novels, Narendra Mohinī and Devakīnandan Khatrī's Candrakānta, are included.[8] He also edited a short lived periodical, Upanyāsataraṅginī, which was dedicated exclusively to the serialisation of novels.[9] Thus Sadāśiva Śarmā made a significant contribution to the early development of this essentially foreign literary genre in Nepal.

Although these early works of fiction, and others such as Vīracaritra by Giriśavallabh Jośī (1903), had the outer form of novels, they still harked back to the Persian tales.[10] In general, they were stories of mystery and miraculous events, or "detective" novels which bore little relation to the society which was contemporary with them. Obviously, the market for Nepali literature was still very small, and most of this fiction was written for the titillation of the literate élite which had gathered around the Rana courts.[11] None of these early novels were based on any aspect of Nepalese life, nor were they set in any recognisable geographical location or historical era.[12] In general, they were contrived to amuse or amaze, or to demonstrate that the moral verities of Hindu tradition were still unassailable.

Modern scholars, influenced by the literary developments of the 1940s, base their judgements of these early novels upon criteria derived from the value of realistic social depiction. They assess the extent to which these works referred to the social realities which were contemporary with them: were they jīvanmūlak, "based on life", or not?[13] and they invariably

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7. Pradhān, op.cit., 1977, p.362.
8. Dayārām Śreṣṭha Sambhava: Nepālī Sāhityakā Kehī Pṛṣṭha, Kathmandu, 1975, p.203.
9. Abhi Subedi: Nepali Literature. Background and History, Kathmandu, 1978, p.111.
10. Pradhān, op.cit., 1977, p.362.
11. Sambhava, op.cit., 1975, p.202.
12. Vīracaritra (1903) was actually set in western Nepal, but its events were pure fantasy. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.112.
13. Tānāsarmā: Bhānubhaktadekhi Tesro Āyāmasamma, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, pp.110-119.

find them lacking in the qualities which are now so highly prized. The first Nepali novel to meet these requirements was Rūpamatī (1934) by Rudrarāja Pāṇḍe, a teacher of history from Trichandra College who later became the Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University.[14] Rūpamatī was the first of a number of Nepali novels to describe the social changes which were occurring in Nepal and it did so in the context of family life. It relates the conflicts experienced by a young man who is influenced by western notions of individual freedom but bound by the traditional norms of familial duty which pervaded his society. Although its characterisations are somewhat insipid, and the author argues implicitly for the maintenance of the "old" values, Rūpamatī is notable for its reference to contemporary issues. Dissatisfaction with the Rana regime was growing among educated Nepalese in the 1930s, and social comment, expressed obliquely, was to become the dominant theme of the fiction of the time. Bhramar (1936), by Darjeeling story-writer Rūpanārāyaṇ Singh and Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā's Campā (1945) took "social realism" a step further. Bhramar is noted for its quite vivid descriptions of middle-class life in Darjeeling, and Campā for its theme of sexual deprivation, a problem for which the author offers no easy solution.[15]

This acknowledgement of the value of authenticity in fiction inspired several authors to write novels which were purely historical in content. Novels such as Rājabandhakī and Rāmakṛṣṇa Kuṃvar Rāṇā, by Ṭukarāja and Padmarāja Miśra incorporated a great deal of historical detail, but paid less attention to narrative style or dramatic structure.[16] Thus these two novels are judged to be inferior to Ḍāyaman Shamsher's enjoyable historical novel Vasantī (1949) which is based on stories from Rana history.[17] A sequel to this novel, Seto Bāgh, "The White Tiger", was published in 1974. The historical novel, however, never established itself as an especially important genre of Nepali fiction.

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14. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.112.
15. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.149.
16. Sambhava, op.cit., 1975, p.204.
17. Pradhān, op.cit., 1977, p.366.

The first novel by the renowned Nepali artist Lainsingh Bāngdel was published in 1947. Entitled Muluk Bāhira, "Outside the Kingdom", it marked an important stage in the development of Nepali fiction and so it is worthy of a more detailed examination. The theme of Muluk Bāhira was the lives of "exile" Nepalese (pravāsī nepālī), mostly labourers or soldiers returning from the Second World War, who were obliged to seek employment in India. A major flaw of earlier Nepali novels had been the excessive emphasis which their authors had laid on events, which undermined the credibility of their characters and often robbed them of their social and cultural relevance. Although the lives of pravāsī Nepalese had already received the attention of Rupanārāyaṇ Singh in his novel, Bhramar, Bāngdel went to greater lengths to analyse the psychological motivations of his characters, and the events described in Muluk Bāhira are more credible, as a consequence. Bāngdel lived in Darjeeling at the time, and so he chose to fill his first novel with the characters with whom he was familiar: the labourers and coolies of the area.[18] His description of their lives bears the stamp of authenticity. Their speech contains local colloquialisms, dialect words and rural pronunciations; India, for instance, is referred to as Mugalān (i.e. "the land of the Mughals") and Darjeeling as Dorling. The following excerpt from Muluk Bāhira describes a peasant girl's reactions to her first sight of Darjeeling:

> mugalānakā ṭhulā-ṭhulā ghara ra cillā saḍakaharū dekhtā myāucī ānandale gadgad bhaī. jivanamā āphule nadekhekā kurāharū rela ra moṭara dekhtā tyo chakkai parī....myāucī, aruṇa kholāko vāripāri pātalako jaṅgalamā gāībastu carāundai goṭhamā goṭhālā goṭhālnīharūkā saṃsaṅgaimā jivana bītāune - aba mugalāna pasera darjiliṅgakā rela, moṭara ghara dekhtā baṛā chakkai parnu svābhāvika kurā ho.[19]

"When she saw the great houses and smooth streets of Mugalān, Myāuchī was choked with happiness. Seeing things she'd never

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18. Ibid., p.368.
19. Lainsingh Bāngdel: Muluk Bāhira, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1968, p.3.

seen in her life, like trains and motor cars, she was amazed.... Myāuchī, who had spent her life grazing the animals in the thick forests of the Aruṇ Kholā, in the company of herdsmen and herdswomen: it was natural for her to be astounded when she entered Mugalān to see the trains, cars and houses of Darjeeling."

Bāngdel is noted for his skill in describing natural scenery, a skill which is attributed to his artistic prowess.[20] Muluk Bāhira is full of descriptions of the weather, the mountains and the changing seasons:

dinabharī tyasa dina ramāilo ghāma lāgirahyo. tara belukā hundai gaepachi ākāśama megha thuprindai gayo. hāvā calnathālyo. paścimabāṭa bagne hāvāle kālo meghalāī tānera sampūrṇa ākāśa ḍhākyo. herdā herdai ākāśa andhakāra bhaera āyo - pānī parlā parlā jasto bhayo. hurī pani calna thālyo. Sabai mānisaharūle āndhīko āśaṅkā garnathāle.[21]

"There had been pleasant sunshine all that day. But as evening fell, clouds piled up in the sky. The wind got up, blowing from the west, and it drew the clouds right across the sky. As they watched, the sky darkened - rain seemed imminent, and the wind began to rage. Everyone feared the storm."

With Muluk Bāhira, Bāngdel established himself as the foremost writer of social realism in Nepali novels:[22] his other works, Māitighar, "The In-Laws' House" (1948) and Laṅgaḍako Sāthī, "The Cripple's Friend" (1949) continued to treat different themes in a similar manner.

The 1950s saw some growth in Nepali fiction: in his literary history, Tānasarmā mentions sixteen novelists whose works were published before 1950, and he considers Rudrarāja Pāṇḍe, Rupanārāyaṇ Singh, Lainsingh Bāngdel and

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20. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.148.
21. Bāngdel, op.cit., 1968, p.75.
22. Pradhān, op.cit., 1977, p.368.

Acchā Rāi 'Rasik'[23] to be the most worthy of note.[24] His list of novels published between 1950 and 1970 contains some ninety titles by forty-four authors.[25]

A logical development of this ideal of social realism was the re-introduction of a moral or political standpoint on the part of the novelist. This is not to say that Nepali fiction again became moralistic or didactic; rather, the message of the novel was expressed, ideally, as an integral, implicit part of the narrative. In his description of the lives of exile Nepalese, Bāngdel had certainly been sympathetic towards his characters in their depressed circumstances, but his novel did not offer any solution to the problem. During the 1950s, however, the Nepali novel became more idealistic and reformist. The social progressivism which had been expressed by Premchand in his Hindi stories and novels certainly exerted its influence over the Nepali novelists of the time. An example of this kind of novel was Basāiṃ, "Home", by Līlabahādur Kṣetrī, a Nepalese resident of Assam. Kṣetrī was quite overt in his condemnation of rural superstition, feudal exploitation and the factors which had led to so many Nepalese deserting their homeland.[26] Basāiṃ is praised for its authentic evocation of Nepalese rural life, and for the colloquial nature of its language. Authenticity of reported speech, and simplicity in the language of narration soon became touchstones of quality in Nepali fiction, as they had in Hindi. The Sanskritisation of the Nepali language is at its least intrusive level in fiction, even today.

The lives of exile Nepalese had been a popular theme of Nepali fiction for some time, but in the late 1950s, the influence of growing cultural nationalism and the appearance of a school of "purist" (jharrovādī) writers encouraged novelists to look to rural life within Nepal for their subject

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23. Rasik died in 1952 at the age of 24. His most popular novel was Lagan, "The Conjunction", a romance which was first published in 1948. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.148.
24. Ibid., pp.146-149.
25. Ibid., pp.213-216.
26. Ratna Pustak Bhaṇḍār (publishers): Sure Success in Intermediate Vernacular Nepali, Kathmandu, 1975, pp.57-58.

matter. Many novels have been written about the lives of the "common people" of particular areas of Nepal, and the dozen or so novels by Śaṅkar Koirālā are probably the best examples of this trend. His Khairinī Ghāt (1961) is regarded as one of the novels which brought "maturity" to Nepali fiction.[27] Its theme is commonplace, taking in various social and economic problems, but the study is related with meticulous attention to the details of rural life and speech:

> usale pharkera heryo - "ramekī āmā, kastī chyau?"
> "sañcai chu. aile samma kālale choeko chaina nānī!" usale bhanī.
> bhaktavīrele hāṃste bhanyo - "kastā chan hāmrā bā āmā?"
> "sañcai chan" usale bhanī.
> "besai bho, sabaile bhanchan sañcai chan" bhandai u aghi baṛhyo.[28]

> "He turned back to look, "How are you, oh mother of Rame?"
> "I'm fine, Death hasn't touched me yet, my child!" she said.
> Bhaktavīre laughed and said, "And how are my father and mother?"
> "They're well", she answered.
> "That's good, everyone said they were well", he said, going on."

Writers of novels which deal with rural Nepal became increasingly concerned to present authentic portrayals of their characters. Thus spellings of many words occurring in dialogue are adapted to convey the rural pronunciation of Nepali; examples from this excerpt are aile (ahile: "now") and bho (bhayo: "happened") and there are many others. This is a feature which is now common to most Nepali novels and stories which include rural characters, and has an earlier parallel in Hindi novels such as Premchand's Godān.[29]

The themes of sexual dissatisfaction, alienation and pessimism which have now become prevalent in the works of younger Nepali writers also began to appear in novels in the late 1950s. Sexuality is in evidence in the novels of Viśveśvaraprasād Koirālā,[30] and in two other

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27. Pradhān, op.cit., 1977, p.370.
28. Śaṅkar Koirālā: Khairinī Ghāṭ, Kathmandu, 1961, p.5.
29. First published Allahabad, 1936.
30. Koirāla was leader of the Nepali Congress Party and was the elected Prime Minister of Nepal 1959-60. His most popular novel is Tīn Ghumtī, "Three Turns", written in a Kathmandu jail between 1960 and 1968. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.221.

important works of the period. These are Govindabahādur Goṭhāle's Pallo Gharako Jhyāl, "The Window of the House Nextdoor" (1959) and Vijay Malla's Anurādhā (1961). The heroine of each novel is discontented with her married life, but they react in different ways. Goṭhāle's heroine elopes with the boy nextdoor, whom she has admired from her window, but Malla's Anurādhā remains at home and is thereby driven to insanity. Nepali novelists, who, with a few notable exceptions, have all been male, have attempted to analyse the female psyche with varying degrees of success. These two novels are clearly influenced by Freudian theories; Malla tries to present his heroine's insanity as a perfectly rational response to an intolerable situation;[31] but the most overt expression of Freudian ideas is found in Sarpadaṃśa, a novel by Tarinīprasād Koirālā. Its hero is a young boy named Kammu, who is obsessed by holes. One day, egged on by his sister, he puts his hand into a hole he has found, and receives a fatal snakebite.[32] This analysis of child psychology is obviously very heavily influenced by Freud, and may also be an attempt at a symbolic representation of male and female sexual rôles.

Two novels of the 1960s are illustrative of the most recent developments in the Nepali novel. The first, Āja Ramitā Cha, "Today There's A Show" (1964) by Indra Rāī, espouses the literary and philosophical attitudes of the Tesro Āyām movement which will be discussed later, with reference to poetry. It is therefore a cynical and gloomy account of the lives of a few individuals of the middle-class society of Darjeeling. The life of the hero, "M.K." is aimless and meaningless, and Rāī is critical of his apeing of western fashions. Āja Ramitā Cha is perhaps the most pessimistic of all Nepali novels.[33]

The second example is the first novel by Pārijāt, a Tamang authoress from Darjeeling. This novel, Śirīṣako Phūl, "Blue Mimosa",[34] (1965) was almost entirely without precedent in Nepali fiction. It won the Madan Puraskār literary prize for fiction in 1965, but it was the cause of

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31. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.118.
32. Ibid., p.118.
33. Ibid., p.119.
34. Blue Mimosa is the title of an English translation of this novel, by Tanka Vilas Acharya and Sondra Zeidenstein, which was published in 1972.

some controversy: some thought it decadent and vulgar, and imitative of western literature, while others hailed it as a truly "modern" novel.[35] Śirīṣako Phūl tells the story of Suyog Bir Singh, a retired soldier in his middle age: his life is empty and meaningless, but he takes solace in alcohol and cigarettes. Gradually he acquires a hopeless and desperate infatuation for the sister of a drinking companion. This woman, Sakambarī, is the complete antithesis of the typical Nepali heroine: she is cynical and even cruel, she wears her hair cropped and smokes continually. The psychological background to the novel is Suyog's memories of his sexual exploitation of Burmese tribal women during his military service. Although it is not a long novel (92 pages), Śirīṣako Phūl is deceptively complex: there are a number of sub-plots, and many of its events are invested with symbolic significance. Suyog's infatuation remains almost wholly unexpressèd, and Sakambarī dies. Her death is not the melodramatic demise of the traditional Nepali heroine, however: there is an underlying suspicion that Suyog's single clumsy attempt to reveal his feelings to her is in some way responsible. The following passage, narrated by Suyog, comes at the end of the book:

> śivarājale ātmahatyā garena vyavasthālāī svīkāra
> gareko cha, ū abhyasta bhaisakeko cha....
> mānisamā māyā ra bhāvanāko hatyā bhaisakepachi mānisa
> bāñccha ra mānisa euṭā meśinabhandā baṛhī kehī hoina,
> yahī satyalāī hāmī śiva ra ma duvaile āphaimā pramāṇita
> garirahekā chauṃ. barī euṭā mūlyahīna mṛtyu marekī
> cha ra śivarāja ra ma sārahīna jīvana bitāirahekā chauṃ.
> aba śivarājako bhāgnuko artha cha usalāī aba chuṭkārāle
> hoina vāstavikatāle aṅgāleko cha ra ma maile
> vāstavikatāharūlāī pacāisakeko chu ra ahile santuṣṭiko
> euṭā paridhi khiñcna sakeko chu.[36]

"Shivarāj didn't kill himself, he's accepted the situation, he's already got used to it....When love and emotion have been killed in a man, the man survives, but he's nothing more

35. Ibid (Introduction), p.1.
36. Pārijāt: Śirīṣako Phūl. Biratnagar (2nd edn.), 1965, p.92.

than a machine. This fact Shiva and I both prove in ourselves. Barī died a useless death, and Shiva and I are living insipid lives. Now Shivarāj has a reason for escaping, but he is embraced by reality, not by relief. As for me, I've digested these realities and I've staked out the limits of my contentment."

The Short Story

Nepali scholars search for antecedents for the modern short story in their own literature, just as they attempt to seek out antecedents for the novel. Yet, unless the story can be said to stem from the orally-transmitted tales of Nepali folk-literature, it must be admitted that the modern form of the Nepali short story is a literary genre which has also been borrowed from foreign literatures. The short story is probably the second most developed genre of modern Nepali literature, after poetry. Unlike the novel, a story could be published in its entirety in the literary journals which were of fundamental importance to literary development. Obviously, a reader requires less leisure-time to read a story and so this genre predominates in Nepali fiction.

The earliest examples of Nepali short stories were published in the Gorkhāpatra from 1902 onwards; most of them were translated from Bengali or Hindi and they adopted the romantic, traditional and jāsūsī themes which preceded the advent of "social realism" to Nepali fiction.[37]

The Nepali short story received its first 'boost' with the appearance of Śāradā in 1934, which published a great number of stories in its earlier issues.[38] The themes of these stories very soon began to concentrate on the problems of contemporary Nepalese society, and particularly on the status of women. Marriage and widowhood were subjects which provided Nepali writers with an inexhaustible source of material for fiction.

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37. The earliest "short stories" to have been published in the Gorkhāpatra are listed in: Mohanarāja Śarmā: Kathāko Vikās-Prakriyā, Kathmandu, 1978, pp.164-174.
38. Ishwar Baral: "Nepālī Kathāsāhityako Viṣayamā" in Kṛṣṇacandrasingh Pradhān (ed.): Sājhā Samālocanā, Kathmandu (2nd edn.), 1977, p.324. Barāl designates 1934-37 the nirmāṇa-kāl, "foundation period" of the Nepali short story.

The most successful exponents of "social realism" in the Nepali stories of the 1930s were Viśveśvaraprasād Koirālā, Puṣkar Shamsher, Bālakṛṣṇa Sama and Guruprasād Mainālī. Their early stories were included in the first collection of Nepali stories, Kathā-Kusum, which was published in 1938.[39]

Mainālī (b.1900) was born in Kanpur in the Tarai, and worked in various administrative posts from 1926 onwards, eventually becoming a judge in the Kathmandu law-courts.[40] Although he only seems to have written eleven stories, several of them have become extremely popular in Nepal, particularly those which deal with themes from the lives of Nepalese peasants. Mainālī is said to have been an avid reader of Hindi fiction,[41] and the influence of Premchand is certainly discernible in his choice of themes and style of language. His most popular story, Parālko Āgo, "A Fire in the Straw" (1938) formed the basis for one of the first Nepali feature-films in the mid-1970's[42] and is probably the most famous Nepali work of fiction concerning the subject of marriage. Its hero is Chāme, a farmer, who has a furious argument with his wife, Gaunthale. She leaves him and goes off to her parents' home: things go very badly for Chāme without his wife. His buffalo, for instance, will not allow him to milk it, and it escapes into the maizefield of a neighbour, Kokale. Kokale is dancing at a wedding, dressed in women's clothes, when he is informed of the buffalo's destruction of his crop:

> kokale mārunī ko lahaṅgaisita dauṛdai makaibārīmā pugyo. kokaleko pośāk dekhera bhaiṃsī jhan ṭhāḍo pucchara lāera kudna thālyo...bicarā cāme kehī bolena. ādhā rātatira balla bālla cār pāñc janā bhaera bhaiṃsī dhapāera lyāe.[43]

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39. Kathā-Kusum, Darjeeling, 1938. The 11th edition of this popular book was published in 1981.
40. Ishwar Baral (ed.): Jhyālabāṭa, Kalimpong (3rd edn.), 1968, p.68.
41. Baral, op.cit., 1977, p.324.
42. Kamalā Sāṅkṛtyāyan, personal communication, Darjeeling 1981.
43. Guruprasād Mainālī: Parālko Āgo, in: Kathā-Kusum, Darjeeling (11th edn.), 1981, p.54.

"Kokale ran off to the maizefield, still wearing his petticoat. When it saw Kokale's attire, the buffalo stuck its tail in the air and leaped around all the more.... Poor Chāme said nothing. Eventually it took four or five men half the night to chase the buffalo away."

Chāme is initially reluctant to admit that life is intolerable without his wife, but he later ponders his fate and Mainālī finds an opportunity to portray the lot of the poor farmer with humour and sympathy:

āphu ta māit gaī gaī, bhaiṃsīlāī pani ek hāte pārera gaī.... bhīrabāṭa ghacyāṛidiūm bhane sāhūko ḍoko. Bholi āera sāhūle bāndhcha. āphule jūṭho cūlo nagare bhokai basnuparcha. Yasto chusī jindagī bitāunubhandā kharānī ghasera hiṇḍnu jātī. tar kharānī ghasera po ke garnu ra! ... ājakal pheṭā gutekā moṭā ghāṭā jogī dekhyo bhane - kodālī khannakā gāhārole jogī bhaekā bhanera mānisaharū gillā garchan....yo yahī saṃsārakā ropale poleko belāmā ṭāṛhābāṭa salakka herdā śītal jasto lāgeko mātra ho.[44]

"Alright, she's gone off to her parents', and she's even left the buffalo accustomed to [being milked by] only one person's hand. He'd push the creature over a cliff, if he didn't have the moneylender's money-bag[45] to worry about. The moneylender would come the next day and tie him up. If he didn't do the kitchen chores himself, he would go hungry. It would be better to smother himself in ashes and wander off as a mendicant than to pass such a rotten life! But what would he do as a yogī?.... Nowadays, people would ridicule a sleek, fat turbanned yogī, they'd say, "He's only become a yogī because it was too much trouble for him to hoe his fields!" ... But when a man is being burned by the heat of worldly affairs, even this seems a little cooler to him when he views it from a distance!"

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44. Ibid., pp.56-57.
45. ḍoko, literally, "basket".

Eventually, Chāme resolves to persuade his wife to return home, and he goes to fetch her. His in-laws are unfriendly, and his wife reluctant, but she allows herself to be cajoled into acquiescence.

Mainālī had travelled widely in Nepal and he had acquired a familiarity with a great variety of regional colloquialisms and rural proverbs, which he used to great effect in his stories. Although the characters of these stories were by no means complex, Mainālī's use of humour in depicting their lives enabled the reader to sympathise and identify with them. The tradition of story-writing based on themes from Nepalese village life which was begun by Mainālī has been continued by a number of other authors. The most notable of these is Rameśa Vikal (b.1932) whose Lāhurī Bhaiṃsī, "The Soldiers' Buffalo", is now regarded as one of the finest modern Nepali stories of rural life. A collection of his stories, entitled Nayāṃ Saṛakako Gīt, "The Song of New Road", won the Madan Puraskār literary prize in 1961.[46]

In the late 1930's, the rôle of Śāradā in the promotion of short stories was supplemented by the journals which began to emerge from Nepalese communities in India; these included Candrikā, Nebulā and Gorkhā.[47] Stories by Govindabahādur "Goṭhāle" and Rūpanārāyaṇ Singh were among the earliest to be published outside Nepal.[48] "Social realism" became as dominant a feature of short stories after the publication of Kathā Kusum (1938) as it had in the novel after the publication of Bhramar in 1936. During the 1940s, a political tone began to creep into Nepali short stories, and this was particularly clear in those written by Viśveśvaraprasād Koirālā, the leader of the Nepali Congress Party who was to become Nepal's last democratically-elected Prime Minister.[49]

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46. Rameśa Vikal: Nayāṃ Saṛakako Gīt, Kathmandu, 1961.
47. Baral, op.cit., 1977, p.327. The development of Nepali fiction in Darjeeling periodicals is described in detail by Gumānsingh Cāmling in Maulo, Darjeeling, 1978, pp.169-190.
48. "Goṭhāle" was the author of some 24 stories, and his first collection was Kathā Saṅgraha (Kathmandu, 1946). Nine of Singh's best stories were published in a collection entitled Kathā Navaratna (Darjeeling, 1950).
49. Known as B.P.Koirala in political circles, the Prime Minister preferred to write under his full name of Viśveśvaraprasād.

In Koirālā's Madheśatira, "To the Plains",[50] the themes of sexual exploitation and socio-economic depression which dominated many of his other works were made to coalesce in a simple narrative in which complaint was merely implicit, although unmistakably present. The story concerns four people, a widow and three men, who are thrown together in a journey to the plains in their search for homes and employment. Certain passages are clearly intended to depict the plight of the landless poor;

> būḍhāle āphno bitekā jīvanakā ghaṭanāharūlāī bhanyo. usle ekacoṭi nikai paisā kamāyo, satra ropanī khetī garthyo. pachi tyasai bigrī bigrī āyo. tyas belā tyo javān thiyo. nidhāramā nāmlo hālī bhariyāko kām garī peṭ bharna sakthyo. aba ta tyo pani sāmarthya chaina. natra yo būḍho yasai bhok bhokai hallirahanthyo ra? aba marne bakhat pani bhayo. peṭako jvālā khapna nasakera mātra yatāuti hiṇḍnupareko.[51]
>
> "Buḍhā told them of the events of his past. Once, he had earned a lot of money and farmed seventeen ropanī[52] of land. Then everything had just gone wrong. He was young then, and so he had been able to take the tump-line across his forehead and subsist as a porter. But now he wasn't capable of even that; otherwise, why would an old man be wandering hungry? Now it was time for him to die. It was only his inability to put out the flame of hunger that made him wander from place to place."

Although the three men of the story are simply homeless, the widow has chosen to leave her home, where she had been mistreated by her in-laws. Her companions are unable to comprehend her willingness to relinquish such security, and one of them makes off with her money. Despite the brevity

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50. Madheśatira was included in Koirālā's influential collection of stories, Doṣī Caśmā, "Faulty Glasses", first published in 1949.
51. Viśveśvaraprasād Koirālā: Madheśatira, in Bhairava Aryāl (ed.): Sājhā Kathā, Kathmandu (3rd edn.), 1979, pp.76-77.
52. An area of land equal to 5600 square feet. Bālacandra Śarmā: Nepālī Śabda Kośa, Kathmandu, 1962, p.895.

of his story, which fills only six pages, Koirālā manages to express his disapproval of Hindu society's treatment of its widows, and to illustrate the degradation which poverty forces on the landless farmer. At the end of the story, the widow's desperation contrasts with her fellow-traveller's optimism:

> ...būḍhole baṛo utsāhasaṅga dakṣiṇatirako, āṅkhāle bhyāunjelasammako, ṭhūlo bistīrṇa maidānlāī dekhāera āphnā sāthīharūlāī bhanna thālyo - "u tyahī ho madhesa. tyahīṃ hāmro uddhāra hūncha.....tara vidhavāmā utsāha thiena.....āphno sānai umeradekhiko sapanālāī - āphno sāno ghar, chorā chorī - saphal banāune icchā garekī thiin. saba tāsako ghar jhaiṃ bhatābhuṅga bhayo, unle pani dekhā - sikī garera utsāhahīn dṛṣṭile dakṣiṇatirako maidānalāī herin.[53]
>
> "With great enthusiasm, Buḍho pointed out the great wide plain to the south, stretching as far as the eye could see. "There is it, Madesh! There's our salvation....." But the widow felt no excitement.... She had longed to fulfil her childhood dream of a little home of her own, and sons and daughters. It had all collapsed like a house of cards. She imitated her companions and gazed southwards to the plains from joyless eyes."

This kind of "social" (sāmājik) story dominated Nepali fiction until the late 1950's, and the most prolific author of such stories, if not the most respected, was Bhīmanidhi Tivārī (1911-1973) who produced ten volumes of Nepālī Sāmājik Kahānī between 1949 and 1968. It is interesting to note that simplicity of language became a mark of quality in Nepali fiction during the 1940's, but many writers began to "re-introduce" some of the more formal conventions of Nepali grammar. In the excerpts from Madheśatira given above, for instance, the plural -ā

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53. Koirālā in Aryāl (ed.), op.cit., 1979, pp.79-80.

ending of adjectives and the feminine forms of verbs (garekī thiin, "had done", herin, "looked") are consistently employed. Koirālā is praised by modern critics for the "purity" and "correctness" of his language, as a consequence. Other writers are criticised for the supposed "impurity" of their language. Bhavānī Bhikṣu (b.1914) is an important writer of Nepali fiction who first came to fame with his Tyo Pheri Pharkalā?, "Will He Return?" (1940). His mother-tongue, however, was the Avadhi dialect of Hindi, and so critics such as Tānāsarmā state that his written Nepali is awkward (apṭhyāro) and artificial (kṛtrim).[54]

Writers of Nepali short stories attempted to present psychological analyses of their characters at quite an early stage in the development of Nepali fiction. In Logne, "Husband", for instance, Puṣkar Shamsher had explained the status of women in terms of social conditioning:

> bālyāvasthādekhi nai sānā juttā lagāirākhera cīniyāṃ
> svāsnī māncheko khuṭṭālāī sāno ḍallo pārī bigāre jastai
> pahilādekhi nai bandhanamā pārī tapāīṃko man "logne"
> padalāī prem garna parokṣataḥ tālīm garieko huncha.[55]
>
> "Like a Chinese woman's feet, which are ruined by being put into tiny shoes from childhood, in order to make them small and round, your mind has been subtly trained to love the status of "husband", for it has been restricted from the very beginning."

Such psychological insights became increasingly sophisticated as Nepali writers became more familiar with the theories of Freud and other European philosophies during the 1960s. Many modern writers are now adopting unusual attitudes to conventional morality; they confront the characters of their stories with dilemmas which seem clichéd, and then describe a response which is unexpected. Our final example in this examination of the Nepali short story is a case in point. In Kālo

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54. Tānāsarmā: Nepālī Sāhityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, p.140.
55. Puṣkar Shamsher: Logne, in Kathā-Kusum (11th edn.), 1981, p.82.

Caśmā,[56] "Sunglasses" by the noted modern playwright and poet Vijay Malla, a middle-class man returns home early one night and finds his wife asleep in bed with another man. Rather than waking them and confronting his wife with her infidelity, he decides to allow their clandestine affair to continue. This attitude of acquiescence and feigned ignorance is symbolised by his purchase of a pair of sunglasses:

> tara ma unīharūmā tyastā udāsīnatā, trāsa, bhaya, jagāuna cāhannaṃ. ma uṭheṃ ra saṅkalpa gareṃ ki ahile nai gaera "gagals" kinera lyāunchu. ānkhāmā gagals lagāunchu. mero nikaṭatāmā pani unīharūmā ḍarako ābhāsa nahos. yinīharū prasanna bhaera khelirahūn. yas lokako pani astitva cha bhanne kurālāī ma kina inkāra garūṃ?.....
> .....nissandeha ma aba gagals kinna jānchu. kālo caśmā lagāera sāmājik naitik manuṣyako rūpabāṭa pratyakṣataḥ nai pṛthak bandachu.[57]

"But I don't want to arouse such dejection, dread and fear in them. I got up and resolved that I would go right now and buy some "goggles". I will wear goggles over my eyes. They should not feel at all afraid even when I am near. They should be happy and continue to play their game. Why should I deny the existence of this particular world?.....
.....Without a doubt, I'll go now and buy some goggles. Wearing sunglasses, I will become quite obviously aloof from the forms of social, moral Man."

Poetry

The 1930s and 1940s saw the establishment of a tradition of Nepali poetry which could perhaps be described as "modern romanticism". Its most famous poet was Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, whose works continue to

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56. Kālo Caśmā is included in Vijay Malla's collection of stories entitled Parevā ra Kaidī, Kathmandu, 1977.
57. Ibid., p.129.

influence other poets today. Although certain changes did occur in this poetry over the years, as its authors became influenced by a rather vague political ideology, it still represents a well-defined era in the history of Nepali literature. Some of the most respected Nepali poets, such as Mādhavaprasād Ghimire, continue to perpetuate this style of poetry,[58] but more recent innovations are inevitably rendering the school of "modern romanticism" obsolete. Some of the earliest departures from this tradition of poetry were made in the mid-1950s by poets such as Gopālaprasād Rimāl, Vijay Malla[59] and Mohan Koirālā. Although Rimāl and Malla are no longer regarded as authentically "modern", their experiments in metre, their unusual choice of subjects and the references they made to contemporary issues and events made them forerunners of later innovators of Nepali poetry. Such tendencies are very clear in Vijay Malla's Chorīlāī Mānacitra Paṛhaundā, "Explaining a Map to My Daughter", which makes a plea for world peace.[60]

Mohan Koirālā is now one of the most respected modern Nepali poets. His early poems were strongly influenced by the romanticism of his more elderly contemporaries, but he became more progressive later in the 1950's and is now one of the few poets with roots in the "old school" to be accepted by younger writers. His most famous poem is Sāraṅgī, "The Violin", in which a description of a Nepalese minstrel (gāine) expresses Koirālā's disenchantment with the broken promises of the 1950 "revolution".

gāine sahiṃlālāī ahile jāṛo jāṛo bhaeko cha
na ta usale sāraṅgī reṭna pāyo tyasaile usako
hāta kathāṅgrieko cha.

varipari usalāī gālī garne mānisa binā ahile ū
śunya cha....[61]

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58. Ghimire, born in Lamjung in 1919, is now a member of the Royal Nepal Academy. His most popular poem is Gaurī (1947), written to express his grief after the death of his wife.
59. Rimāl (b.1918) is a "revolutionary" poet from Kathmandu whose experiments in prose-poetry (gadya-kavitā) made him one of the most influential writers of the 1950s. Malla (b.1925) is another "revolutionary" poet whose poems, stories and plays are still popular and influential.
60. Included in Churamani Bandhu (ed.): Sājhā Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1967, p.151.
61. Ibid., p.203.

"Now brother minstrel is chilled to the bone
Nor did he get the chance to play his violin,
And so his hands are numb.

Now without men around him to abuse him,
There is emptiness....

....ū malāī sodhcha - yahāṃ nīco ra uñco
jamīna kahāṃ cha kodalīko lāgi nirvyājako hos -
- pyāsako lāgi kholānālā ra nadīharū
mero mehanatako lāgi eka gilāsa pānī
kahāṃ chan tī 'sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ' bhanne magaja saḍekāharū
kahaṃ chan tī 'satyameva jayate nātṛtam' bhanneharū.[62]

"He asks me - Where is the high land, the low land, rent free for the hoe,
The rivers and streams for my thirst,
A glass of water for my labours,
Where are those rotten wise men who say "May all beings be happy"
Where are the men who say "It is truth which triumphs, not falsehood?"

The young poets of the 1960s and 1970s had their poems published in the various literary periodicals of Kathmandu and Darjeeling, and notably in Pragati and Rūparekhā. The latter journal was instrumental in establishing the new poetry and it was unusual both for its longevity and its progressive editorial policy. The literature published in these journals was described in the editorial statement of Pragati, vol.3, no.4;

"The realism of the contemporary age is expressed in many different forms of poetry. The choice of subject has become limitless and the classical distinction which was made between "suitability" and "unsuitability" has gone. To tell the truth, nothing is inadmissable in modern poetry."[63]

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62. Ibid., p.206.
63. Quoted by Abhi Subedi in: Sirjanā ra Mūlyāṅkan, Lalitpur, 1981, p.129.

These changes in the general philosophy of Nepali literature came early in the 1960s, and they were heralded by the influential Tesro Āyām movement. Tesro Āyām, "The Third Dimension", was a literary journal which was first published in Darjeeling in May 1963.[64] It became the organ of a minor literary movement which had quite a marked effect upon the Nepali literature of its decade, influencing even such established figures as Mohan Koirālā. Tesro Āyām was edited and published by three young writers who shared a common philosophy: Vairāgī Kaiṃlā, Īśvaravallabh and Indra Rāī. Their contention was that Nepali literature was "flat" or "one-dimensional", and that it should be "three-dimensional" in order to depict and explain all facets of human character and behaviour.[65] Thus they discarded most of the clichéd allegories, metaphors, metres and adjectives of the romantic school which had preceded them and they urged Nepali writers to adopt a moral dimension of their own in their compositions.[66] They also stressed the need for a "fresh exploration" of their language but, although their language certainly changed as a result, it did not necessarily become more colloquial or accessible. Many of their poetic allusions and allegories were so original that their meanings were obscure, or else they were perversely abstract. Thus the best of this Āyāmelī, "Dimensional" literature is genuinely innovative, while other works have been described as "literary obscurantism at its worst".[67] The undoubted novelty of this literary experimentalism extended even to the titles of poems such as Merī Āmāle Ātmahatyā Gareko Deśā,[68] "The Land where my Mother Committed Suicide", or Band Kuhiromā Nānīko Pāilā,[69] "A Child's Foot in the Closing Mist". Such titles were deliberately unorthodox, and sometimes they lacked any apparent meaning.

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64. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.80.
65. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1970, p.251.
66. Abhi Subedi: "The Movements in Nepali Poetry of this Decade", Flow, vol.1, no.2 (Kathmandu, 1970), p.67.
67. Ibid., p.67.
68. Subedi, op.cit., 1981, p.140.
69. Ibid., p.165.

The philosophy of "Third Dimensionalism" was expounded in Indra Rāī's essays in Darjeeling journals,[70] and Āyāmelī poems began to be published in 1961, when they first appeared in Rūparekhā.[71] The depth of the "literary divide" which then existed between Darjeeling and Kathmandu meant that poets in Nepal regarded them as a purely local development for several years, as they remained virtually unknown in Kathmandu. Abhi Subedi claims the credit for having introduced the Tesro Āyām poets to Kathmandu literary circles with an article in Rūparekhā in 1964,[72] but Tānāsarmā makes the interesting observation that many writers in Nepal were already making similar literary experiments.[73] This was evident from the psychological elements of novels such as "Goṭhāle's" Pallo Gharako Jhyāl, "The Window of the House Nextdoor" or stories such as Vijay Malla's Kālo Caśmā, "Sunglasses". The significance of the Tesro Āyām movement was not that its supporters had followed the "modernistic" literary trends which were already influencing other Nepali writers, but that they had attempted to propound a coherent philosophy of literary "modernism".

Tesro Āyāmelī poetry became quite popular in Nepal during the mid-1960s, although many critics complained about its syntactic errors and obscurities.[74] In general, the poetry was "cerebral" and expressed disillusionment, although its tone was not wholly pessimistic. Vairāgī Kāiṃlā, one of the three founders of Tesro Āyām, was perhaps the best writer of political satire in modern Nepali prose-poetry. His poems appeared in Tesro Āyām and Rūparekhā between 1961 and 1976; the most famous of his works are Hāṭ Bharne Mānis, "The People Filling the Marketplace" and Māteko Māncheko Bhāṣaṇ: Madhyarātapachiko Saṛakasita, "A Drunkard's Sermon to the Street after Midnight". The following extracts

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70. Subedi, op.cit., 1970, p.67.
71. Subedi, op.cit., 1981, p.139.
72. Abhi Subedi: "Ādhunik Kavitā ra Dārjīliṅkā Kehī Tannerī Kaviharū", Rūparekhā, vol.39 (1964). This article is included in his Sirjanā ra Mūlyāṅkan (Kathmandu, 1981).
73. Tānāsarmā, op.cit., 1977, p.208.
74. Subedi, op.cit., 1978, p.82.

are taken from the latter poem, which exhibits many of the distinctive features of Āyāmelī verse:

ajhai sutdachan gandeulā jhaiṃ gujulṭiera
ātma-parājita mānisaharū
dhartīko asvāsthyakara gharaharūmā
ani, yati aberasamma?[75]

"Still they sleep, tangled together like earthworms:
The self-defeated men,
In the unhealthy houses of the earth
And, do they sleep so late?"

Kāiṃlā also makes quite overt criticisms of the prevailing social order:

mātra koṭaparvakā vijetākā
mātra śāsana garne parivārakā
praśasti ra vaṃśāvalī lekhiekā
itihāsako nāṅgā pannā jastā
yī peṭīharūlāī
muṭudekhi mastiṣkasamma cirine garera
timīle cyātideu-phāṭideu[76]

"They are inscribed with mere flattery, and the lineages
Of the victors of the Koṭparva[77] massacre,
Of the ruling family,
Like the naked pages of history:
Split these pavements from head to heart
Rend them and crack them!"

The poem ends on a note of optimism; the present may be gloomy, but there is still hope for the future:

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75. Royal Nepal Academy: Ādhunik Nepālī Kavitā, Kathmandu, 1971, p.306.
76. Ibid., p.308.
77. A reference to the coup of 1846, in which Jang Bahadur managed to eliminate most of his political rivals and establish the Rana régime.

masita herideu - prathamapalṭa:
āṅkhāle bhyāunjelasamma
hāmī hāmro cāraitira
vijayako nimti yuddhabhūmi au -
jindagīko nimti ujyālai ujyālo mātra dekhdachauṃ.[78]

"Look with me for the first time -
As far as the eyes can see, in every direction,
We see a battleground for victory
And nothing but a radiant light for life!"

Kāiṃlā's Hāṭ Bharne Mānis is equally satirical and its final verse is clearly imitative of T.S.Eliot; its last line is repeated three times:

upha! mṛtyu, āja bajārabāṭa khālī hāt gayo[79]

"Oh, Death, went empty-handed from the market today."

Iśvaravallabh's poems were slightly more orthodox than Kāiṃlā's, and they sometimes resemble the later poems of Mohan Koirālā. Unlike Kāiṃlā, who seems to have 'retired' from the literary world, Iśvaravallabh still writes poems which are among the most popular of modern Nepali literature. He adopts a tone which is more emotional and less intellectual than Kāiṃlā's, and writes in a language "tinged with expatriation and nostalgia".[80] The following extract from one of Iśvaravallabh's more recent poems, Āvāj Kahāṃ Cha?, "Where is the Voice?", attests to his humanistic opposition to traditions and beliefs which he regards as outmoded superstitions:

kehī bhanna nahune kālabhairavalāī, hanumān ḍhokānira
hāmīle ta bhanyauṃ - taṃ pani hiṇḍ, kina baschas ḍhuṅgāmā,
u hiṇḍena,
usalāī bhaya cha,
u paglincha mānisako bāṭo hiṇḍepachi,
mānisa ra usasita yatro pṛthakatā

78. Royal Nepal Academy, op.cit., 1971, p.310.
79. Ibid., p.325.
80. Subedi, op.cit., 1970, p.67.

ū ra hāmī yati pharka, ū bhairava hāmī mānisa,
tī bahādura mānisaharū,
ḍhuṅgā bhairavasita hārecha,
tī anekauṃ bhāṣā bolne mānisa,
tāntrik ḍhuṅgāsita hārecha - ājako itihāsa.
āo, ḍhuṅgāharū pagla, baga, tarala ban,
yo mānisako jagat ho.[81]

"To the dumb Kāl Bhairava, near the Hanuman Gate
We said - Get up and walk, why do you sit on a rock?
He didn't walk,
He is afraid,
He'd melt if he walked the road of Man,
We and he are utterly separate,
Utterly different: he is a Bhairava, we are men,
Such valorous men,
To be defeated by a stone Bhairava,
Men speaking multifarious languages
Are defeated by a tantric rock - today's history.
Come, you rocks, melt and run and soften,
This is the world of Man."

Although the poets of Nepal were more strongly influenced by Mohan Koirālā than their counterparts in Darjeeling,[82] the elements of psychological analysis, sexuality and disillusionment which were central to the Tesro Āyām movement seem to have become a permanent feature of modern Nepali poetry. If anything, contemporary "modernist" poets are more pessimistic than their predecessors of the early 1960s. Much of this can be attributed to a greater familiarity with modern western literature: the surviving poets of the "modern romantic" school usually cite Wordsworth, Tennyson, Shakespeare, Tolstoy etc. as the foreign

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81. Published in Madhupark Kavitā (vol.14, nos.6/7; Oct.-Dec. 1981), pp.34-36.
82. Yugeshwar P. Verma: "Contemporary Nepali Poetry" (unpublished paper, Kathmandu, 1981), p.3.

writers they most admire, but "modernist" writers find more in common with T.S.Eliot, Sartre or Kafka.[83] Nepali poetry is no longer the exclusive preserve of the high-caste male with an abundance of leisure time; the new poets, men and women, are graduates of the colleges and university of Nepal. Their familiarity with the philosophies of Marxism and existentialism has not made them mere mimics of foreign genres. Rather, their acquaintance with the western idiom has provided them with a basis for their innovations: Abhi Subedi notes that the pessimism of Eliot's Wasteland is "of a different order" to the disillusionment of the young Nepalese intellectual.[84]

Nepali poetry is read at least as much for entertainment as for political enlightenment, and so the most successful and memorable satires are those which are both humorous and perceptive. Although Kāiṃlā was probably the most well-known satirical poet of the 1960s and 1970s, the intellectually "highbrow" tone of his poems made them less accessible to the ordinary reader than those of other poets. The most widely-read satirical poet of the period was a Thakali called Bhūpi Śercan. Śercan's early poems were mostly whimsical love-lyrics such as Dui Setā Kalilā Hatkelāko Parevā: Timro Namaste,[85] "A Dove of Two Delicate White Hands: Your Salutation", but later he turned to political and social satire. His humour is grim and pessimistic:

pheri ekacoṭi
saṅgī-sāthīharūko sūcī banāunucha
pheri ekacoṭi
bhayānaka bamaharū bokera, uṛirahekā havāijahāja
ra roketaharū munibasera
lekhnucha priyajanaharūko nāmamā
saphalatā, śānti, ra dīrghāyuko śubhakāmanā patra![86]

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83. Subedi, op.cit., 1970, p.66.
84. Ibid., p.70.
85. Included in Royal Nepal Academy (op.cit., 1971), p.296.
86. Bhūpi Śercan: Nayāṃ Varṣa, "New Year", in Bandhu (ed.), op.cit., 1967, p.276.

"Once more, I have to draw up a list of my friends,
Once more, sitting beneath rockets and aeroplanes carrying
horrific bombs,
I have to write my dear ones letters
Wishing them success, peace and long life."

Śercan's potent image of Ghumne Mecamāthi Andho Mānche, "A Blind Man on a Revolving Chair" epitomises his anger at "authoritarianism, narrow-mindedness and vanity"[87] and is perhaps his best-known poem:

ciyāko kiṭalībāta euṭā sūrya udāuncha,
sadhaiṃ raksīko ritto gilāsamā euṭā sūrya astāuncha,
ghumirahekai cha ma baseko pṛthvī-pūrvavat
phagata ma aparicita chu
variparikā parivartanaharūdekhi,
dṛṣyaharūdekhi,
ramāilodekhi,
pradarśanīko ghumne mecamāthi
karale baseko andho jastai.[88]

"The sun always rises like this from the tea-kettle,
Always sets like this in an empty wineglass,
The earth I inhabit revolves as ever,
I alone am unaware of the changes around me,
Unaware of its scenes and pleasures,
Like a blind man at an exhibition,
Obliged to sit in a revolving chair."

Other poets contrive new allegories from the paraphernalia of everyday life to express their discontent: the use of English vocabulary in Haribhakta Kaṭuvāl's poem below is perhaps as sarcastic as the message of the poem itself:

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87. Verma, op.cit., 1980, p.4.
88. Royal Nepal Academy, op.cit., 1971, p.295.

ghari-ghari hāvā bharirahanuparne
'paṅkcar' bhaeko -
'bāisikal' ko 'ṭyūb' jasto yo jīvana
kati ṭīṭhalāgdo cha[89]

"This life is like a punctured bicycle-tube
Which has to be re-inflated regularly:
How pathetic it is!"

It would be difficult to imagine anything more different from the classical beauty of Lekhnāth's lyrics or the sentimental outpourings of Devkoṭā. Modernist poets no longer celebrate the beauty of life, but complain of its aimlessness. Abhi Subedi notes that modernity for the poet is "both a cult and an attitude";[90] in political terms, this attitude derides much of the history of Nepal, adopting a pacifist stance towards world events:

najanmos tī sālikaharūbāṭa aba pheri arko jaṅgabahādura
purideu cihānamā vigata itihāsakā kālā akṣaraharū
natra dohorinechan vigata itihāsamā jhaiṃ hāmro itihāsamā
uhī ghaṭanā ra pātraharū[91]

"May another Jang Bahadur never be reborn from those statues:
Fill the cemetery with the black letters of past history,
Lest the incidents and characters of bygone times
Recur in our history."

One of the most welcome features of these new developments has been the emergence of several notable poetesses, such as Pārijāt, Kundan Śarmā, Vānīrā Girī and Premā Shāh. They use many unusual images in their poetry, and Vānīrā Girī is perhaps even more pessimistic than her male counterparts:

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89. Quoted by Subedi (op.cit., 1981), p.118.
90. Subedi, op.cit., 1970, p.65.
91. Upendra Śreṣṭha: Timī Ghaiṇṭobhariko Ghām, "You're A Jar of Sunshine", quoted in Subedi, op.cit., 1981, p.120.

sarāpa lāgcha malāi
yo garbhāśaya ra phūlaharūko
jo kāma-lāgna na pāera
phāliekā chan puṭekā kasauṇḍi jhaiṃ
jo kāma-lāgna napāera
sukeko chan rasabinākā dākh jhaiṃ[92]

"I am cursed by
This womb, these flowers
Like a broken pot, thrown away useless,
Like a grape without juice, dried up, inedible."

The following verse, from a poem by Premā Shāh, seems to ridicule the romantic poetry which had always been written by men:

jāḍokā tī rātabhara
timīlāī
yo oṭhakā nyāno āvaraṇamā
guṭmuṭyāera
maile timro kānamā
praṇayakā kati gīta bharisakeko chu
aba ta
priya! timī
reṣṭurāṅko ṭebilamāthi
tīna ghaṇṭādekhi
cisieko eka kap
ciyā mātra hau.[93]

"All through these winter nights
Bundling you up in the warm protection of these my lips,
I have filled your ears
With many songs of love.

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92. Vānīrā Girī: Euṭā Euṭā Jiundo Jang Bahādur, Kathmandu, 1974, p.59.
93. Premā Shāh: Premikālāi Pratyuttara, "Retort to a Lover", quoted in Subedi, op.cit., 1981, pp.149-150.

But now my darling,
You are only a cup of tea,
Gone cold for three hours
On a restaurant table."

Several attempts were made in the 1960s to establish a literary movement which would succeed the Tesro Āyām: each involved a few young poets, centred on a literary periodical in which their works were published. None of them lasted very long, or wielded any great influence; although the poets centred on Rūparekhā were the most enduring, they cannot be said to have represented any particular "movement". The only exception was the Saṛak Kavitā Krānti, "Street Poetry Revolution", which involved large numbers of young intellectuals in the late 1970s, during the period of political freedom which preceded the Referendum of 1980. These poets were politically motivated, hoping to convince the populace that a "Multi-Party" system should replace the Panchayat democracy which had recently been challenged. Poets recited their works in the streets of Kathmandu throughout the summer of 1979 and their poetry was published in several short-lived journals such as Svatantratā, "Freedom" and Nepāl Āmāko Pukār, "The Cry of Mother Nepal".[94] Much of the poetry was essentially banal and propagandist and its language was consequentially extremely simplistic. Verma notes that even those who had been "responsible for pedantry in the past" now insisted on simplification.[95] The Saṛak Kavitā Krānti ended with the announcement of the results of the Referendum in 1981, which vindicated the existing system of government.[96] Although this phenomenon had been primarily political, it was notable for its use of Nepali poetry in an attempt to achieve its ends, and for the efforts that were made to simplify the language of the poetry in order to make it more accessible to the audience.

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94. This information is the result of personal observations made during a visit to Kathmandu in August-September, 1979.
95. Verma, op.cit., 1980, p.9.
96. Rishikesh Shaha: Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal, Delhi, 1982. This study contains an account of the referendum of 1981.

The final chapter of this study has summarised the development of Nepali literature over the last few decades. The features of the literature dicussed in this chapter are by no means common to the writings of every modern Nepali poet or author, but they are significant as they seem to represent a conscious reaction to the conventions of romanticism and social realism which had been established during the 1940's. The overtly "modernist" nature of much of the poetry of this later period, with its attendant intellectualism and frequent obscurity has meant that the popularity of "conventional" Nepali verse remains virtually unchallenged. This is quite evident from the fact that Sājhā Prakāśan's best-selling books of 1983 were Devkoṭā's Munā-Madan (7432 copies), Mādhavaprasād Ghimire's Gaurī (1572 copies) and the Rāmāyaṇa of Bhānubhakta (1448 copies).[97] Yet these new developments in poetry, which is still the predominant genre of Nepali literature, indicate that innovation and experimentation are likely to continue in the increasingly rich literature of the national language of Nepal.

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97. Rising Nepal, 17th January, 1984.

Conclusion

This study has documented the linguistic diversity of Nepal, analysed the emergence of Nepali, the national language, and described the development of its literature.

The first part of the study described the great variety of languages currently spoken in the eastern Himalaya. This adequately demonstrated the need for a link-language which could be adopted by the varied ethnic and linguistic communities of Nepal. This diversity made a comprehensive account of the history and current status of every Nepalese language impracticable, but certain languages were felt to merit a more detailed examination than the others, since they possess a large number of speakers or an important literary tradition. Thus the examples of Maithili, the second most widely spoken Indo-Aryan language of Nepal, and Newari, the only Tibeto-Burman language of the country to have produced a significant literature, were discussed in some detail. Certain generalisations were also made regarding the "minority" languages in terms of the extent to which their speakers have acquired bilingualism with Nepali, and the influence which Nepali has had upon them.

Although just over a half of the population of Nepal now speaks Nepali as its mother-tongue, familiarity with the national language is still at a fairly low level in the densely-populated Tarai and the more remote regions of northern and eastern Nepal. The greatest concentration of mother-tongue Nepali-speakers is found in western Nepal, where the language is generally believed to have had its origins, but bilingualism is also becoming widespread among speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages in the central districts of the country. As a result of rapid expansion through the Nepalese hills, Nepali is gaining ground among the Indo-European speaking population of the south and the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples of the east and north. It is evident that this trend will continue; in the hills, Nepali will displace Tibeto-Burman mother-tongues to an ever-increasing extent, and will also influence the character of such

languages, which are already adopting a great deal of its vocabulary.

The need for a detailed documentation of the languages of Nepal is becoming urgent, for the more "minor" languages will inevitably lose their mother-tongue speakers as the process of linguistic unification continues. The Government of Nepal cannot be expected to encourage the development of such a plethora of minority languages for administrative or educational purposes. The consolidation of the status of Nepali is certainly vital for national integration, without which economic development cannot proceed. Very few studies of the more obscure Nepalese languages have appeared since the Summer Institute of Linguistics published its glossaries and grammatical and phonemic summaries in the early 1970's. However, a Linguistic Survey of Nepal has been conducted in recent years by the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies in conjunction with the Nepal Research Centre, and its results should soon be published. Perhaps this project will redress the imbalance of Nepalese linguistic research, which tends to concentrate on Nepali or its dialects, or on assessments of bilingualism with Nepali among people who speak other languages.

The dominance of Nepali over the other languages of Nepal was already well-established when the Government invested it with an important rôle in its schemes for national integration. The second part of this study began with a description of the current status of Nepali in Nepal and northern India, and illustrated its dominance with statistics from the relevant censuses. It is clear that Nepali, originally an unstandardised regional lingua franca, has now become the main language of administration, education and literature in Nepal. Government policy has had a profound effect upon both the character and status of the Nepali language, and the second part of this study continued to describe this transformation. The processes of cultural and linguistic "Nepalisation" which had their origins before the political unification of the country in the late 18th century were enhanced considerably by the development of a growing linguistic nationalism among educated Nepali-speakers about one hundred years ago, and moreover by the publication of the first Nepali books and journals. Once the Nepali language had entered the printed page, its unstandardised nature became as painfully obvious to Nepali writers as its

dearth of actual literature. Thus great efforts were made during the first few decades of this century to reform and "unify" Nepali grammar and spelling, and to achieve a consensus among Nepali writers regarding the form of literary Nepali which was most acceptable. This study identified the factors which led to Nepali acquiring its modern status of a national language, and described the efforts which have been made by Nepali scholars to render their language adequate to perform the functions which are prescribed for it.

In order to assess the success of their efforts, the rôle of Nepali as the medium of national education was described in some detail. Despite the persistence of some important problems in areas where Nepali is still a minority language, it is clear that the language is now established as the medium of instruction in most Nepalese schools. In tertiary education, however, achievement of the official objective of an all-Nepali medium of instruction continues to be hampered by the dominant status of English as the international language of science and technology. The obscurity of much of the newly-coined technical vocabulary and the shortage of Nepali textbooks are additional problems. Nepalese educationalists have been obliged to review their policy of "Nepalisation" in tertiary education, and it seems likely that some significant changes will be made.

The third and most lengthy part of the study described the growth of Nepali literature. This growth has occurred as a consequence of the official status accorded to Nepali, its subsequent grammatical and orthographic standardisation and the enrichment of its lexicon. Yet literary development in Nepali has been largely a phenomenon of the present century; most of the early inscriptions and texts mentioned in this study have been sought out and published over the past thirty years. The history of "modern" Nepali literature is now traced back at least as far as Bhānubhakta Ācārya, who is hailed by present-day critics and historians as its "Founder Poet". It does seem reasonable to assume, however, that very few early Nepali texts were known in Nepal until the late 19th century, when they were first brought to light by enthusiasts such as Motīrām Bhaṭṭa. The 14th and 15th century inscriptions of western Nepal and the medicinal,

devotional and panegyric texts of the 16th to 19th centuries are, however, of great value for the study of Nepali literature, and their importance has been acknowledged in these pages.

The language of the early inscriptions which we have considered certainly resembles Nepali, but the precise nature of its relationship to the modern form of the language has not been established with any finality. There is a great need for further research into the linguistic development and dialect divergence which occurred in western Nepal during the medieval period, and additional material must be unearthed and analysed before any definite conclusions can be made. This study has described some of the better-known inscriptions of the period and has made some tentative suggestions concerning their relationship to modern Nepali.

The development of a literary form of Nepali is more clearly discernible in the devotional and panegyric poems which were written during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Again, there is a paucity of material but great credit must be given to scholars such as Ishwar Baral, Bālakṛṣṇa Pokharel, Dayārām Sambhava and the late Bāburām Ācārya for their painstaking work in producing annotated editions of most of the available texts. The writings of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Shāh and the Stutipadya of Yadunāth Pokharyāl are of particular interest because of the light they shed on the political conditions in the Nepal of their times. The fortunes of the rulers of Nepal seem to have been particularly influential on Nepali verse during this embryonic period of Nepali literature. The military defeat suffered by the Nepalese at the hands of the British in the early 19th century appears to have prompted poets to abandon their composition of panegyric poetry in favour of a devotional variety of religious verse. This would seem to indicate that some kind of patronage was extended to poets by the rulers of Nepal at the time but so far little evidence to support this idea has come to light.

The discussion of the development of literary Nepali during this period has been illustrated with extracts from some of the more interesting texts. In general, they bear a strong resemblance to early Hindi verse,

for Nepali poets had not begun to compose poetry in a style which could be said to be especially distinct from that of other north Indian languages. As we have noted, the first poet to be accorded the distinction of having founded an authentically "Nepalese" genre of Nepali verse was Bhānubhakta Ācārya, whose Rāmāyaṇa was by far the most important literary work in Nepali to be written in the 19th century. The fundamental rôle which was played by Bhānubhakta in the development of Nepali literature was described in detail. The discussion then went on to describe the contribution made by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa, the poet who immortalised Bhānubhakta towards the end of the 19th century by publishing the Rāmāyaṇa and a biography of its author. Motīrām and Bhānubhakta have now become virtually inseparable in the minds of Nepali literary historians, who regard them as the two "founding fathers" of Nepali literature. It is indeed difficult to disentangle historical fact from legend in the accounts one reads of the life of Bhānubhakta. The rôle played by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa in the establishment of the "Founder Poet's" hallowed reputation may be far greater than is usually supposed.

Bhaṭṭa was certainly more concerned with the development and modernisation of Nepali literature than his renowned predecessor and he played an important part in the introduction of printing. The early stages of the development of a Nepali publishing industry formed the subject of further discussion. Between 1910 and 1940, several Nepali literary journals played a prominent rôle in the standardisation of the written language and the promotion and development of its increasingly sophisticated literature. The greatest progress during the early part of this period was made in Indian centres of Nepali publishing such as Banaras and Darjeeling. This was due to the censorious attitude taken by the Rana government of Nepal. Later, influential Nepalese journals such as Śāradā took the lead and became the forum for the publication of some of the classics of Nepali literature. This was the "formative" period of modern Nepali literature, during which the works of the more progressive poets and authors first began to appear in print, and the most successful efforts were made to standardise the literary language. These developments have been described in the context of the severe

restrictions imposed by the Rana government on the freedom of writers, and the increasingly tense political atmosphere that eventually led to the overthrow of the regime in 1950.

After about 1920, the number of Nepali writers with published works to their credit increased rapidly. This study has singled out three of the most influential literary figures of the period and described their lives and work in detail. It was felt that detailed analyses of the careers of specific writers would lend depth to this description of 20th-century Nepali literature, and that this treatment of the subject was to be preferred to a mere summary of every important title and author of the period. The selection of these three writers was by no means a difficult task; Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl, Bālakṛṣṇa Sama and Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā were indisputably the most outstanding and influential figures in the Nepali literature of their time.

Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl is still regarded as the "Poet Laureate" of Nepali literature. His formal and carefully-crafted poems still exert an enormous amount of influence on the small number of poets who perpetuate the tradition of "classical" Nepali poetry which he initiated. He is often regarded as "old-fashioned" by more progressive writers, who dislike the overly ornamental style of his language and his outmoded philosophies. Although Lekhnāth's compositions are probably read less frequently nowadays, his contribution to the development of Nepali poetry is very important, and epic works such as his Taruṇa Tapasī are undoubtedly worthy of being numbered among the classics of Nepali literature. Most of his more famous poems are included in the two volumes entitled Lālitya which were published in 1967-8, but it is regrettable that many other compositions never re-appeared after their initial publication in journals which are now unavailable. The publication of a volume of his "collected works" is long over due.

The outstanding Nepali playwright, poet and artist, Bālakṛṣṇa Sama, was an unusually rebellious member of the ruling élite of Nepal whose intellectualism and staunch nationalism dominated Nepali literature for decades. His plays are still the undisputed classics of Nepali drama, partly because after him the development of that particular genre faltered

in the face of competition from the Hindi cinema; this is a modern phenomenon which Sama himself had predicted. Since Sama's death in 1981, Nepali scholars have reappraised his contribution to Nepali literature and a welcome result of this was the recent publication of a comprehensive volume of his shorter poems, many of which had never been published before. This new volume will probably enhance Sama's reputation as a poet, which had always been eclipsed by his talent as a dramatist.

The third poet upon whom attention was focussed in this study was Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā, the Nepali mahākavi and the only Nepalese poet to have acquired any kind of reputation outside Nepal. A great deal has been written about Devkoṭā by Nepali scholars, who extol his wide range of talents and prolific creativity and analyse the facets of his romantic and humanistic philosophy. Devkoṭā was also the only Nepali poet to be made the subject of a serious literary study by a scholar from the West. David Rubin's Nepali Visions, Nepali Dreams could be said to represent the beginning of western academic interest in Nepali literature and, as its author freely admits, it leaves a great deal of ground uncovered. Of particular interest are Devkoṭā's epic poems, such as Śākuntalā, Sulocanā and Pramithas, which have not been translated into any other language. Unfortunately, much of Devkoṭā's work is flawed by his reluctance to edit or revise his poems and by the highly unusual and frequently obscure nature of his allegories. Yet many of his compositions represent the greatest achievements of the "romantic" school of Nepali poetry which became popular during the 1940's, and the publication of an annotated and edited volume of Devkoṭā's poems would be most valuable.

By the mid-1950's, a substantial body of literature existed in the Nepali language. Romanticism was becoming less popular in poetry, which began to adopt vaguely political themes of humanism and egalitarianism, but continued to use the clichés of the earlier style. The language of this poetry did become more colloquial, however, and younger poets became less deferential to the conventions of metre which had governed the verse of predecessors such as Lekhnāth. Nepali prose-literature had really only begun some fifty years previously, but had already become quite

sophisticated. "Social realism" became the hallmark of quality in Nepali fiction during this period. The final chapter of this study summarised the development of Nepali fiction, and went on to describe the important departures from the norms of mid-20th century literature which were made by the new Nepali writers of the past three decades. Recent Nepali literature has begun to reflect a conflict between tradition and modernity among the educated urban class which has emerged since the late 1950's. Modern Nepali writers are more familiar with foreign literatures and philosophies than their predecessors were and the prevailing tone of their poems, novels and stories is one of alienation and cynicism.

Nepali is now the established national language of Nepal, and its literature is, to all intents and purposes, the national literature of the country. Poets such as Bhānubhakta, Motīrām Bhaṭṭa, Lekhnāth Paudyāl and Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā are now considered to be important figures in Nepalese history, and their works are taught and studied in schools and colleges throughout the kingdom. Nepali literary criticism has also become increasingly sophisticated since the 1950's; the literary research conducted in Nepalese academic institutions is almost wholly concerned with the history of Nepali literature. This literature now possesses its own traditions and well-documented history, which have enabled it to develop an integrity equal to that of other north Indian literatures. It is undoubtedly an important field of study for students of South Asian literature and history as it is a major element of the unified cultural identity which is gradually being assumed by modern Nepal.

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